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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the history faculty of Mary Immaculate College, especially my supervisor, Dr. Maura Cronin, for your help – you were a wonderful inspiration! I also would like to thank my fellow-postgraduates in MIC for their support.

Sincere thanks to the staff of the many libraries in which I worked, but most particularly the staff of Clare County Library's Local Studies Centre, for their wonderful support.

The funding provided by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences made this research possible for me, and I wish to formally express my appreciation for their support.

I would also like to thank all my friends and most particularly my family, above all, those that gave me the final push!



County Clare, Times Atlas 1895

Introduction

By the early twentieth century Irish popular political identity included a strong separatist and anti-English element. The present study explores the evolution of this sense of national identity in one particular Irish county over the latter half of the nineteenth century. The study, focusing on County Clare, originally evolved from an analysis of the events surrounding the construction and unveiling of the Manchester Martyr Monument in the town of Kilrush (in the west of the county) between the years 1897 and 1903. This initial study showed the complexities of constitutional nationalist politics in the aftermath of Parnell's downfall, but in particular it suggested the parallel presence of a very diverse yet powerful radical nationalist element within local politics at this time. The individuals and groups involved in planning the monument – ranging from town councillors to members of the GAA – expressed a very distinct radical political ideology which, departing from the non-violent ideals of constitutionalism, glorified acts of physical force resistance, and in doing so showed a strong hostility towards the state. These individuals sought not only to impart these ideas to those who attended the monument's unveiling, but also to pass their message to later generations. The monument, located in a conspicuous position in the town, reminded observers of the actions of the Manchester Martyrs who were 'judicially murdered by a tyrannical British government on the 23rd November 1867, for their gallant rescue of Kelly and Deasy'.

This view of nationalism and the relationship of past and present was not confined to the Kilrush monument. It was also imparted through literature and was visible in the books which were in the possession of local men such as Thomas Maguire, a member of the United Irish League and later the Gaelic League, in Cross, south-west Clare. This collection still survives in its entirety, and an analysis of its contents gives valuable insights into the ideas that shaped the evolving radical nationalism in the area at the time. Some of the song books in the collection still have pencil markings and comments beside those songs which appealed most to Maguire: 'The Last of our Band', 'The Irish Raparees' and 'To Duffy in Prison'. In the collection is also a selection of romantic and

sentimental literature (some of which will be discussed later) which included Canon Sheehan's *Graves of Kilmorna*, and Kickham's *Knocknagow*.¹ It is thus evident in this reading material that radical and romantic political attitudes, far from being dormant in the closing years of the nineteenth century, were quite widespread, and distinctly showed the qualities – glorification of militarism, romanticisation of the past, anti-Englishness, republicanism – that are more typically associated with the later republican period.²

The manifestation of this type of radical political attitude has been somewhat obscured by historians, and it is only quite recently that attempts have been made to reassess the extent to which radical nationalism was alive in provincial Ireland in the period before World War One. The works of both McGee and Kelly were important in reassessing the extent to which radical nationalism and the IRB were a much stronger element within political life in the late nineteenth century.³ The present study of Clare falls into line with their work, and offers a reappraisal of previous research – especially Fitzpatrick's *Politics and Irish Life* – which has tended to obscure the extent to which radical nationalism operated within late nineteenth century Irish politics. Fitzpatrick presents the political outlook of the later republican Sinn Féin activists in Clare as being shaped by the constitutional tradition rather than by the radical nationalism of the Gaelic League, Sinn Féin and IRB.⁴ The present study argues, on the other hand, that while the constitutional tradition was influential in the Clare context, there also existed in the county a quite visible radical nationalist element which became more pronounced and developed over time. This contributed most to the republicanism of the later period. This radical nationalism became quite visible in the county from the 1860s onwards, and as its ideas spread, came to shape the thoughts and opinions of a large sector of the local population over the following half century. This 'radical' political thought, while difficult to quantify and define, showed some distinct characteristics in the context of Clare in this period. Through its sanction of and support for aggressive and violent

¹ This work was the possession of my great-grandfather and is still extant.

² Norman Vance, *Irish Literature Since 1800* (London, 2002) p. 65.

³ Matthew Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism* (Suffolk, 2006); Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 2005).

⁴ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life: The Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Dublin, 1977) pp 127-138.

methods, it increasingly departed from the more moderate outlook and methods adopted by constitutionalists, its aggressive attitudes were increasingly expressed in hostility to the government of the day, which came to be viewed as a foreign colonial authority. Those who supported this radical nationalism showed a growing collective identity which, by the early twentieth century, became increasingly opposed to that of the existing state.

How these radical political ideas developed has been the subject of recent historical debate. Campbell's work on Galway has argued that it was the radical agrarian tradition which influenced the nature of Sinn Féin politics after the First World War.⁵ But, as the present thesis will argue, the most important factor in developing these political attitudes was the complex force of modernisation which forms the foundation of Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen* tracing the evolution of republican sentiment in France and the rural populace's growing awareness of political affairs. Weber's thesis concerns how the evolution of republicanism went in tandem with 'modernisation' i.e. rising literacy, an expanded education system, road and rail development, improved agricultural methods and living conditions, all of which facilitated in integrating 'under-developed France...into the modern world and the official culture – of Paris of the cities'.⁶ Yet Weber's popular work has been the subject of much historical debate. One could indeed argue that in the Clare context, the ongoing land agitation and the emergence of peasant proprietorship was the most important incentive to the development of political consciousness. However, the trends and the ideas examined in this thesis suggest that modernisation in the sense discussed by Weber (i.e. rising literacy, developing communications and a growing consciousness of ideas which were shaped by American and outside influences) was a far more important contributor to the spread of political ideas in the county. Many historians have criticised Weber's assertion that the manifestation of political attitudes or 'politicisation' was visible in France between 1890 and 1914. As Merriman has argued, the progress of politicisation was evident both before and after the period in question and that Weber's use of this

⁵ Campbell, Fergus, *Land and revolution: Nationalist Politics in the west of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005).

⁶ Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870-1914* (California, 1976), p. x.

time-frame has resulted in portraying the population of France before this as ignorant not just politically, but culturally and intellectually – inhabitants of a ‘country of savages’.⁷ The present study does not claim that political ideas were non-existent in the Clare context before the 1860s and neither does it assert that the population were in any way ‘savage’ before late nineteenth century modernisation had its impact. Political ideas which had existed beforehand – especially in the O’Connellite period – were vital in shaping the politics of the 1860s. However, what makes the years between 1860 and 1907 most significant, this thesis argues, is that it is the first of two phases of popular political radicalisation. It begins with the emergence of the IRB as a real political influence in 1865 and closes with similar emergence of Sinn Féin in 1907, leading directly on to the second phase (that explored by Fitzpatrick) between 1912 and 1923. The radical political ideas evolving between 1860 and 1907 were the result of the gradual political mobilisation discussed in McCartney’s *Dawning of Democracy* and Boyce’s *Search for Stability*.⁸ Both works show that political attitudes did not just ‘happen’, but were the result of a slow and prolonged period of mobilisation, shaped by forces as different as agrarian discontent and political rebellion, and were accelerated by the forces of social and economic modernisation in both town and countryside. But while these works offer some valuable insights in the spread of political ideas nationally, the present study, concentrating like Fitzpatrick’s and Campbell’s on a single county, gives some new insights into the regional experience of changing political ideas in the generations before political independence.

Land issues were predictably central to evolving popular identity. Clare was a county of small farmers and from 1861 the majority of farm holdings were between fifteen and thirty acres, and these small farmers were often the driving force behind political movements in the county.⁹ The farming class’s incentive to become more politically involved seems to have been triggered by a particular social change – i.e. the alteration of inheritance patterns in the aftermath of the famine, allowing the eldest son to take

⁷ John Merriman, ‘Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914 by Eugen Weber’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 50 (September, 1978) p. 535

⁸ D.G. Boyce, *Nineteenth Century Ireland: The Search for Stability* (Dublin, 2005); Donal McCartney, *The Dawn of Democracy: Ireland 1880-1870* (Dublin, 1987).

⁹ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Agricultural Statistics Crops and Stocks, 1847-1911* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], November 1997. SN: 3575.

over the farm, while the non-inheriting sons remained on the farm for a long period of time, their subordination expressed in their being described as ‘labourers’.¹⁰ This position, the study argues, resulted in non-inheriting farmers’ sons becoming typically identified with revolutionary activity from the 1860s onwards, being prominent in the IRB in 1865 and in moonlighting (i.e. violent agrarian protest) in the 1880s. While, as Comerford and Conley suggest, membership of such movements may have provided a social outlet for otherwise marginalised individuals, the Clare experience suggests that political motivation was as important as social and economic.¹¹ Involvement in political and subversive activity was not only an expression of land hunger, or of a wish to gain access to land, but also gave the individuals a sense of belonging based on political activism. It was these small farmers’ sons who were not only predictably prominent in the land agitation in the county, but who – much more than the urban artisans, clerks and publicans associated with subversive nationalism elsewhere – also provided most of the manpower for the Irish Republican Brotherhood locally from the 1860s onwards. A study of Clare offers a unique study in modernisation and in the parallel development of economic change and political activity throughout the late nineteenth century. While not attempting to over-simplify the process by which political attitudes developed, it is possible to trace the spread of modernisation from the more prosperous regions in the east (not all prosperous but with higher levels of prosperity and a greater proportion of good land) to the more poor, peripheral and isolated regions in the west. Clare, because of the uneven nature of its economic and political development, makes for a fascinating political study. It had prosperous regions in the east that were equivalent to the Golden Vale regions in Limerick and Cork. This, as the present study suggests, was a politically active region even as early as the 1860s when this study commences. Such territory predominated around Ennis and along the south of the Shannon, while areas around Bunratty, Tradaree and Newmarket were fertile and productive, with large deposits of alluvial soil, producing large yields of hay and grass, all leading to relative prosperity

¹⁰ *First report from the select committee of the House of Lords on Land Law Ireland together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence and appendix* (1882), HC, 1882, XI, p.272; *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 174.

¹¹ Carolyn A. Conley, *Melancholy Accidents: The Meaning of Violence in post-famine Ireland* (Maryland, 2009); R.V. Comerford, ‘Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid-1860s’, in Alan O’Day (ed.), *Reactions to Irish Nationalism 1865-1914* (London, 1987) pp 21-33.

for farmers.¹² These areas were also quite advanced in terms of English speaking and literacy, and it was apparent that political ideas here were quite developed in the 1860s. In contrast, it appears that political ideas were less advanced in those economically poor regions in the south-west of the county. This region held out the longest in terms of the spread of education and of the English language, and in terms of the development of communications. The type of land and terrain here may have contributed to relative political isolation. South-west Clare had the poorest land in the county, and this was aggravated by the proliferation of small holdings in this region into the early 1900s.¹³ Despite the fact that many farmers in this region were anxious to improve their economic situation, it was argued in 1907 that smallholding had prevailed to such an extent that it was almost impossible for a farmer to expand his holding.¹⁴ This situation was further aggravated by the fact that this part of the county was densely populated, and the union of Kilrush (stretching from the town of Kilrush to Loop Head) had the highest concentration of the population in the county throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁵ The proliferation of small holdings and over-population in these regions was linked to the infertility of the soil.¹⁶ This was an area exposed to Atlantic winds, and with a lack of shelter which made farmers dependent on hardy crops like potatoes and oats.¹⁷ It is therefore no surprise that economic isolation was

¹²*The parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland, 1844-1845* (Dublin, 1846) pp 38, 403.

¹³ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Agricultural Statistics Crops and Stocks, 1847-1911* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], November 1997. SN: 3575; Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 279.

¹⁴ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland*, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 191.

¹⁵ A quarter of the entire population of the county lived in Kilrush Union in 1907. *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 294.

¹⁶ T.S Finch, *Soils of the County Clare* (Dublin, 1971) p. 27. . The identification of these soil types has been facilitated by an overview of the work of T. F. Finch, which, although carried out after the period of this study, has relevance. The 'gley' soil types were identified as being predominant in the region of south-west and north-west Clare, (as far as Lahinch and Doolin). This region was considered to have soil of poor physical properties and without proper fertilisation, and was therefore unsuitable for both tillage and pasture farming. The soil type presented 'difficulties in cultivation especially in the development of a desirable tilth', while 'the poor drainage conditions' retarded growth – 'even for pasture production this is a decided disadvantage'

¹⁷ While there was probably more than one reason why potatoes were adopted here as the dominant crop (and it could have been simply used because it met the requirements of those one acre farmers who proliferated here), it was also advantageous in that it was easy to grow, being suited to most soil types. Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Agricultural Statistics Crops and Stocks, 1847-1911* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], November 1997. SN:

accompanied by social, political and cultural isolation and it was not until the late 1890s that this area gained widespread prominence throughout its involvement in the United Irish League – an organisation which at this time prioritised the small holder, and which attracted smallholders more than any other political movement beforehand had done.

Accelerated political involvement also occurred in north-west Clare in 1907. This region was different from other parts of the county and was more comparable to the flat and open regions in Connaught like east Galway. It was characterised, perhaps more so than any other part of the county, by a very wide gap between prosperous and poor farmers. The Ennistymon Union in south-west Clare, with its shallow soil, which precluded tillage but was particularly suited to grazing, which allowed graziers to derive the maximum profit from their produce with minimal investment.¹⁸ The union had the highest number of small holders (under ten pounds) in the county, while at the same time, having some of the largest ranch farms in the county from the 1850s onwards – a certain recipe for social tension.¹⁹ The anxiety of small holders in this region to improve their lot, aggravated in part by the predominance of graziers who often occupied land beside their holdings, undoubtedly accelerated political involvement during the UIL and later during the ranch war.

The spread of modernisation from countryside to town can also be uniquely analysed in the Clare setting. Most western towns did not develop until the late eighteenth century, such as Kilkee, Kilrush, Ennistymon, Miltown Malbay and Lisdoonvarna, when tourism

3575; *The Farmers Magazine* (London, 1844) p. 19; *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 170.

¹⁸ Finch, *Soils of the County Clare*, p. 34; *Second Report From the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Land Law Ireland together with the proceedings of the committee Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*, H.C., 1882, XI p. 136. In this rich limestone region, the soil produced yields of sweet grass which meant that it was particularly useful for fattening animals in a relatively short period of time. It also had what was commonly known as ‘winterage’ land, which allowed the grazier to feed his cattle outdoors in the winter.

¹⁹ Statistics on holdings sizes taken from: *Royal Clarkson, Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Agricultural Statistics Crops and Stocks*, SN: 3575; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1878*, H.C. 1878- 1879, LXXV, p.55; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1880*, H.C. 1881, xciii, p. 5; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1881*, H.C. 1882, LXXIV, p. 19; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1882*, H.C. 1883, LXXVII, p. 19; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1891*, H.C. 1892, LXXXVIII, p. 37; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1898*, H.C. 1899, CVI, p. 35; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland with a detailed report on agriculture for year 1906*, H.C. 1908, CXXI, p. 24; *Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Second Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, pp 271-296.

accelerated the development of these regions as popular tourist sites.²⁰ The principal towns of the county, which included Ennis, with a population of 7,843 in 1851; Kilrush (4,471); Killaloe (2,218); and Ennistymon (1,741), suffered a massive population decline following the famine of the 1840s, and their population continued to drop thereafter.²¹ Between 1861 and 1911, the population of Killaloe, dropped by fifty-five per cent, that of Ennis and Ennistymon by thirty per cent, and that of Kilrush by eighteen per cent. Some of these changes precipitated greater links with the local community. Some towns changed dramatically from being small-scale industrial centres to market towns heavily dependent on the income of farmers who came there to deal in animals or buy in the retailers' shops. The town of Ennis had a fairly vibrant industry in the early 1800s, connected with textile making (having a woollen mill, tucks and grist mill and a flax mill) and the manufacture of finished products (including coats and blankets). It also produced raw material for food (having a flour mill and a corn mill) and spin-off industries connected with drink (including brewing, distilling and cooperage). All of these industries appear to have declined in the period 1800-1840, and while the late nineteenth century was characterised by attempts to renew manufacturing (e.g. flax production and spinning) in the town these efforts failed and no new major industries were established from the 1860s onwards, the last of those connected with the pre-famine period, Bannatyne's Corn Mills, officially closing its doors in 1899.²² In the late nineteenth century, Ennis and other towns therefore were transformed into shopping and market towns for the surrounding agricultural population, providing a variety of clothing establishments, public houses and hardware stores and livery stables, which met the needs of the farming community.²³

Despite (or perhaps because of) this economic decline, Clare was far more outward looking than most counties. Its population declined drastically in the period after the famine and between 1841 and 1851, the county's population dropped from 286,394 to 212,440, a decrease of twenty-six percent. Such a population decline was greater than

²⁰ Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'A History of Urban Origins and Village Formation in County Clare', In Matthew Lynch and Patrick Nugent (eds), *Clare History and Society* (Dublin, 2008) p. 124.

²¹ Vaughan and Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics*, p. 32.

²² Tim Kelly, 'Ennis in the nineteenth century', MA dissertation (University College, Galway, 1971) pp 156-160

²³ *Slaters' Directory* 1870, 1881; *Bassetts' Directory* 1875, 1880-1881.

for any other county in Munster, matching those economically poor coastal regions in the north-west of Ireland, such as Mayo and Galway.²⁴ Yet while Clare showed a unique parallel with such Connaught regions, the county was nonetheless different. While the population in Connaught moved seasonally, searching for work outside the provinces, in the Clare context seasonal migration was minimal, most of the population decline was due to permanent emigration.²⁵ This emigration accelerated in the post-famine period, and was particularly high during the years 1851-1861, when the population of the county dropped by about twenty-two per cent, at least two-thirds of which decline can be attributed to emigration.²⁶ Many of those who left (who were for the most part labourers and small farmers) opted to emigrate to bigger cities in the United States, especially New York and Boston (which undoubtedly seem to have been the most popular) but also to cities in Canada, England and Australia.²⁷ While the majority of emigrants did not return, their money was regularly sent home where it became an important subsidy in paying the rent.²⁸ As well as this, those abroad, facilitated the spread of political ideas at home. As well as providing money, emigrants also sent letters home, which showed a keen awareness of all the latest local political events and news.²⁹ Their interests were never far from home, and coinciding with the growing mobility of individuals abroad, many returned for short visits throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, while others returned to settle at home permanently, where they purchased farms in the countryside or businesses in the towns.³⁰ The close rapport between the worlds of home and abroad undoubtedly facilitated a growing consciousness of national issues, and this American dimension played an important part in facilitating the development of radical nationalism at home in the late nineteenth century.

²⁴ W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821 – 1971* (Dublin, 1978) p. 8.

²⁵ *State of Ireland, Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Select Committee appointed to enquire into the disturbances in Ireland, in the last session of parliament; 13 May-18 June, 1824*, H.C., 1825, VII 1., p. 220.

²⁶ Vaughan and Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics*, p. 297.

²⁷ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland*, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 174.

²⁸ *Clare Journal* (cited hereafter as *CJ*), 9 November 1882; *Clare Independent* (cited hereafter as *CI*) 25 January 1883.

²⁹ *Irish World*, 15 January 1881; *CJ*, 8 December 1890.

³⁰ *CI*, 11 January 1883; *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland*, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 187.

Clare was unique in any study of modernisation because modernising trends occurred surprisingly later than most counties. In the 1850s, the education system was still very much distrusted by the Catholic population, and there were still disputes concerning proselytism in the schools.³¹ Up until this time illiteracy was still high, and while census statistics are by no means an accurate gauge, it was apparent that roughly well over fifty (63.1) per cent of the population were considered illiterate in 1841 and 1851. The 1860s was a trigger for modernity in this county, and at this time, the lay population seems to have become more accepting of the education system. A reflection of growing educational trends was reflected in the illiteracy levels, which dropped significantly in this period levelling out at approximately less than twenty per cent (19.2) in 1891.³² The Irish language predominated in this county for an unusually long time and lasted in those areas in the west and north-west of the county that were associated with illiteracy and poverty, increasing those areas' isolation from both the urban population and the wider world of politics.³³ In large rural areas in Clare in the 1850s, according to one observer, English was called '*the new tongue...*and correctly so, in as much as it describes the people's general, indeed almost total, ignorance of it'.³⁴ This, in conjunction with the incompleteness of the network of roads in these regions exacerbated their remoteness and isolation, and it was not until the last three decades of the nineteenth century that the inhabitants of county Clare became much more closely involved in national affairs.³⁵ However, when these infrastructural developments took off after 1870, they coincided with rising literacy and an increasing circulation of nationalist literature and texts all of which tapped into and enforced a very distinct political identity that stressed militancy, separatism, and anti-Englishness. Nowhere was this more evident than in the rise of social facilities and leisure. Not just an example of 'patriotism as pastime' and an instrument by which political attitudes were increasingly

³¹ *CJ*, 10 February, 11 September 1851, 2 February 1852, 22 June 1854.

³² Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Literacy, 1841-1911* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], November 1997. SN: 3582.

³³ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Language, 1851-1911* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], November 1997. SN: 3573.

³⁴ *The seventeenth report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland for the year 1850 Vol. I.*, H.C., 1851, XXIV, p. 135.

³⁵ For a comparison see, George Taylor and Andrew Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland* (Shannon, 1969); Samuel Lewis, *County Clare: A History and Topography* (Ennis, 1998); *Second Report From the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Land Law Ireland together with the proceedings of the committee: Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*, H.C., 1882, XI, p. 136.

shaped, the social clubs that were established in the last decades of the nineteenth century reflected not only the political opinions of the Catholic bourgeois class, but also the deeply felt political attitudes of the wider local population. Whereas in the 1850s socially and culturally Clare was still very much isolated, this spread of modernisation – literacy, increased contacts with America and the wider world, and access to patriotic literature, meant that it was plunged into the wider world of radical politics by the end of the century.

The spread of modernisation and the rise of political attitudes in Clare was not something that suddenly happened, as Fitzpatrick suggests, on the threshold of the twentieth century. The process took some fifty years, and can be traced through an analysis of the various political events which occurred in the county from the 1860s onwards. Politics changed from being largely irrelevant to become a major focus of popular interest as the century progressed. The development of this political involvement can be studied largely through an examination of growing resistance to both the law and the authority of local clergy. As in most other counties, in the aftermath of the famine, public life was generally dominated by priests and landlords. The ‘Sixmilebridge Affair’ (where a number of local people were killed following an election riot) is a case in point. The incident itself revolved around the clergy and landlords competing for control of votes, clerically-led crowds attacking voters who were loath to go against the political wishes of their landlord. Some individuals were genuinely torn between loyalty to their landlord and their priest; others admitted that although they were willing to vote, they understood neither the meaning of the word politics, nor the affiliation of the candidates involved.³⁶ Politics were dictated to them by others and the local population showed little inclination to exercise its own political will independent of landlord or cleric. But the emergence of the IRB a decade later witnessed a major decline of the political clout of landlord and priest. Unlike other counties, Clare from the 1860s onwards had a strong IRB involvement that increasingly

³⁶ *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare County Election Petition; together with the proceedings of the Committee (1853)*, H.C. 1852 – 1853, IX, pp 50, 54, 62, 75, 76. See also, *State of Ireland, Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Select Committee appointed to enquire into the disturbances in Ireland, in the last session of parliament; 13 May-18 June, 1824.*, H.C., 1825, VII 1., p. 222. Fr. Malachy Duggan also reported that in the parish of Kilballyowen, residents had little concern with Irish politics or history – except those people that could read – who were few and far between in the area at this time.

challenged the dominant leaders in local politics. This subversive movement became increasingly influential in the political world from the 1860s onwards and challenged the once established traditional landlord, clerical dominance in political circles.

In 1867, two futile Fenian outbreaks occurred in the county, one in Corofin and another in Kilbaha. The most significant and influential feature of the rising was its failure, which gave rise to the widely supported Amnesty Campaign in 1869. This campaign was the first, after the O'Connellite repeal campaign of thirty years earlier, to mobilise large crowds in pursuit of a common objective, a phenomenon that became even more significant when tenants combined to join the Land League following Parnell's visit to Ennis in 1880. The mobilisation of the county in the land agitation at this period was to a great extent the work of the IRB. In fact, reports of visits to Ennis by John Devoy in 1878 and 1881, where he held meetings to appoint leaders of the brotherhood and organise branches suggest that the IRB was to the forefront of agrarian agitation and was far from being a loosely organised or isolated body in this period.³⁷ While land now came to dominate the political question, first in pursuit of reduced rents, and later seeking peasant proprietorship, the campaign went beyond the purely agrarian. It challenged clerical political authority and eventually pushed the priests, especially with the establishment of the National League in the county in 1884, and again during the Plan of Campaign in 1887, to identify with nationalist political causes.

If modernisation implies consciousness of political issues, and a willingness by the population to exercise their own political will, a further stage in the maturing of popular political ideas was evident with the fall of Parnell in 1891. Clare was one of the few counties to support the unpopular Parnellite side and its actions are not just a reflection of the strong link Parnell had with the county – but a reflection of the increasingly independent political opinions of the population. As Weber has shown, politicisation was not about moves to the left or the right, but was grounded in an awareness that

³⁷ Colonial Office Papers (CO) 903- 10. Investigations regarding secret societies and individuals. Devoy, visited Ennis in 1870, and 1878, where he was impressed with the Leaders there. In 1881 he again visited Clare, along with PJ Sheridan (disguised as a priest) and PN Fitzgerald. There is no other mention as far as I know of other Devoy visits, so we can safely say that 1870, 1878 and 1881 are the three noted times of his visit. In 1877, there was a number of appointments though, which suggests that the movement was up and running before Devoy arrived, with McInerney appointed as treasurer and Clune appointed county centre.

political alternatives exist.³⁸ Clare public opinion in the late nineteenth century was beginning to recognise these alternatives. Some observers identified the words ‘Parnellite’ in Clare, with anti-clericalism and if this is true, it highlights the extent to which the clergy had ceased to be a driving force in local politics.³⁹ Land issues continued to serve as politicisers into the twentieth century, rising political involvement being stimulated by both the United Irish League and Sinn Fein, both of which introduced land issues into political debate in both modernised and peripheral areas, and into both countryside and town. However, while research to date has stressed the extent to which political ideas were radicalised by land, in the Clare case this is only one side of the equation. It can be argued that the establishment of clubs and associations encouraged by the new cultural revival was even more influential than land in shaping the new radical nationalist attitudes. The most significant of these were the 1798 Centenary Association branches and the Gaelic League, both of which were established in the county in 1897, the former in Kilrush, and the latter in Miltown Malbay. Unlike other trends nationally the clergy did not assume total control of the Gaelic League, rather it was the IRB who exercised most control of these branches in the Clare context.⁴⁰ It was this radical element rather than the Catholic element, which thereafter played an intrinsic part in shaping popular ideas and spreading political attitudes in Clare in the late nineteenth century – ideas that, while still ill-defined, stressed a glorification of the past, an encouragement of militarism, and a degree of anti-Englishness that had not existed (except among a small minority) half a century earlier. The thesis is organised as follows. Chapter One considers the role of modernisation in the politicisation of the county’s population. It explores the link between politicisation and social and economic change from the 1860s onwards, stressing in particular the impact of rural modernisation – from developments in infrastructure to rising standards of literacy – and paying special attention to the increasing integration of the county’s urban centres into the wider world of national affairs. Chapter Two focuses on perhaps the most integral issue which united the population of Clare in the late nineteenth and

³⁸ Eugen Weber, *Comment la Politique Vint aux Paysans: A second look at peasant politicisation*, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 87 (April, 1982) p. 358.

³⁹ Lord Morley, *Recollections* (London, 1917), vol. 2, p. 32.

⁴⁰ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 75; CBS, Home Office, Précis of information relative to secret societies, Shelf Number, 3-716 (cited hereafter as CBS. PIRSS), Carton Three, 14 October 1901, 25520/S, 19 August 1902, 27596/S; Crime Branch Special ‘S’ Files, National Archives of Ireland (cited hereafter as CBS), 26298/S.

early twentieth century – land. It questions the extent to which land and issues over land-related issues played a role in shaping political ideas, and traces how economic distress facilitated political consciousness. This chapter examines moonlighting in Clare, asking who the moonlighters were and what were their aims. It considers how this and other varieties of crowd mobilisation facilitated a rising consciousness of broader national issues, and how this consciousness spread from eastern to western regions of the county over the period from 1880 to 1907.

Greater consciousness of wider issues was hugely facilitated by the IRB, and Chapter Three looks at the role of this movement in the politicisation process, and how the brotherhood's emergence in local political affairs from the 1860s onwards shaped a wider national consciousness and facilitated the spread of radical political attitudes. It explores the extent of IRB influence in social, political and cultural organisations and suggests that its influence in shaping popular sentiment was much greater in a local setting than heretofore supposed. Through an examination of the developing political attitudes of the local population, Chapter Four looks at the role of local authority figures in both the ranks of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and the Catholic clergy. It questions to what extent these groups shaped popular political opinion, and asks how their actions encouraged or determining the political actions of the population in a provincial setting. It charts the growing involvement of both police and priests in late nineteenth century Clare politics, examining their stance regarding political issues and the growing political awareness of both town and countryside.

Chapter Five examines the role of three categories of individual in the radicalisation of popular politics in the county. These are firstly, prominent local men who exercised political influence within the county at time when mass communication was still underdeveloped. The second group are those Irish-Americans who fostered a popular consciousness of outside affairs, and put local nationalism into a wider context. The third group are those women who within both the public and private sphere shaped the nationalist identity of a younger generation. Placing the process of provincial politicisation within a wider framework, Chapter Six explores the culmination of the collective radical political identity that had been developing from the 1860s. It examines the role of mass popular assemblies, clubs and associations – especially the Gaelic League – in creating and spreading a sense of identity which while partly based

on economic issues, was militant, romantic, and above all, at odds with the existing state.

In conducting this study a wide variety of sources has been used. The research has involved minute research in a variety of newspapers from 1850 to 1907. During this time-frame, as Legg has shown, a variety of newsprint emerged in the county, almost all of which was biased towards some political agenda or party.⁴¹ For example, in the 1860s the conservative *Clare Freeman* and *Clare Journal* were the only newspapers to report in any detail on the Fenian movement in the county. Both were particularly hostile to Fenianism, the *Freeman* attempting very much to underplay the strength of the movement locally, mostly in an attempt to pacify its readership, which was typically composed of gentry and landlords.⁴² To achieve a more balanced view, the accounts from these local papers are contrasted with national and American newspapers such as the *Irishman* and the *New York People*, which in contrast, tended to give an almost over-optimistic and exaggerated view of the Fenian movement's strength in the county. A similar attempt to balance newspapers of contrasting views is made when dealing with the land agitation of the post-1879 period. These papers included the *Clare Independent*, the *Kilrush Herald and Kilkee Gazette*, and later the *Clareman*, all of which were run by Land League and United Irish League members, and were used as propaganda for the land movement locally. The accounts in these newspapers are balanced with less partisan newsprint such as the *Clare Journal*, and in some instances the *Times*, which appear for the most part, despite their ostensible landlord orientation, to take a more neutral stance towards the land movement at this time.

As well as being politically biased, all these newspapers also tend to give a very urban-centred account of political affairs in the county. No weekly newspapers existed in the west and north-west of the county at the beginning of this study in the 1860s, and very little attention was given to those areas outside the main urban centres and the main

⁴¹ Marie Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press 1850-1892* (Dublin, 1999) pp 177-221.

⁴² Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, p. 187; Tim Kelly, 'Ennis in the nineteenth century', p. 207; *Clare Freeman* (cited hereafter as *CF*), 16 December 1865.

road network. In this study, much of the work in relation to politicisation in county Clare draws very much upon urban centres, especially in the east of the county. Such centres received extensive coverage in the newspapers, while those remote isolated western areas in the areas south west of Kilrush and in the extreme north west of the county around Ballyvaughan, get little mention until the closing decades of the nineteenth century when greater networking and road links brought media publicity to these regions. Even in the official documentation of the time this imbalance is evident, though this may actually reflect regional variations in political activity. Police reports to Dublin Castle, for instance, produced very little information on IRB activity in western areas such as Kilrush, where, the constabulary stated, 'we want an informant badly'. To some extent, this was because of a community of silence and in 1890, when a tailor in the town was asked to provide information on IRB activity, he quickly left: something that the authorities believed was 'influenced by fear than any other motive'.⁴³ In other instances lack of police barracks in some western areas meant that some activity went on unchecked and unrecorded for some time.⁴⁴ This all makes it difficult for the researcher to trace agrarian or political activity in such parts of the county, though random information taken from contemporary travellers' accounts and from the retrospective accounts of the Folklore Commission, as well as from local songs still extant, have facilitated identification of political activity in regions which might otherwise have been impossible to trace.

Official reports, including Fenian Papers, Registered Papers, Colonial Office Papers and Crime Branch Special Reports, are also prone to certain inaccuracies. Fenian Papers and Irish Crime Records were highly prone to exaggeration: i.e. both before and during the Fenian outbreak in 1865, identifying as potential activists those who merely sang rebel songs or expressed any form of hostility towards the police. While their coverage became somewhat more balanced in the last years of the nineteenth century, Registered Papers and Crime Branch Specials Reports were also prone to certain exaggerations, the latter relying very heavily on a network of informants in the county, who sometimes tended to give exaggerated accounts perhaps for financial reasons. Their exaggerations

⁴³ CBS, 870/S, 'Prosecution of Martin McDonnell Kilrush, Under the Protection of Person and Property Act', (July 1890).

⁴⁴ CBS, 400/S.

are contrasted with the very matter-of-fact information provided in Colonial Office papers (both CO 903 and CO904) which tended towards a much more level-headed and cautious approach to identifying political agitators in the county. Furthermore, later nationalist IRA witness statements and memoirs, together with material collected by the Folklore Commission, while often containing rare jewels of information, are skewed by both the nature of local memory, and the political bias of the individuals who recounted such stories. It has been possible to balance these reports with accounts from the other side of the political divide. Information taken from landlords' accounts, such as those of O'Callaghan-Westropp, and Lord Inchiquin, travellers' accounts, diaries of political moderates such as P.J. Dillon, and later oral accounts of RIC men, tend to give a very different perspective on the activities of political activists at this time.

Finally, information utilised to determine holding size and population level, for example, through census, trade directories and valuation reports, all give only a very vague idea of the type of county Clare was at the time. Amongst other things, census ages are often inaccurate, with discrepancies between individuals' ages in 1901 and 1911, making it difficult to be certain of the ages of some of younger political activists whose careers spanned the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Valuation reports and parliamentary commission reports completed during the latter half of the nineteenth century also tend to give a very inaccurate perception of the local economy. Those nationalists who appeared on the Land Commission in the 1880s and the Congested Districts Board Commission in the early twentieth century were for the most part a mixture of IRB, Land League, and United Irish League sympathisers, making it difficult to gauge if their perceptions of poverty and perceived injustice were exaggerated for political reasons. To achieve a more balanced view, these individuals' recorded ideas on poverty and distress in western regions have been supplemented by the various asides written in the margins of police reports, as well as the admittedly limited census statistics on land holding sizes, which gives a multi-dimensional portrait of the nature of distress in these western regions.

Chapter One: The forces of modernisation.

Factors of ‘modernisation’, which ranged from the development of infrastructure to rising literacy, in conjunction with various pieces of pro-tenant legislation, were decisive factors in bringing about drastic changes in the countryside. These changes facilitated the spread of political ideas and led to a growing political awareness, so that by the 1880s rural areas became more attuned to urban affairs. Prior to this, perhaps the most significant barrier to the spread of these political ideas was evident in the physical nature of the landscape itself. Without roads, the rural inhabitant remained cut off from urban affairs, from news, political ideas and knowledge.

In the late eighteenth century, the rural inhabitant was still very much removed from urban affairs. While main roads connecting Ennis to Galway and Ennis to Limerick were described by tourists as being in an ‘excellent condition’, outside these urban networks, there were still many poor and rugged roads in the countryside.¹ A map of Clare in the late eighteenth century emphasises this gap between urban and rural. The map depicts main roads linking the county capital of Ennis to urban centres in Galway *via* the northern town of Crusheen, Limerick *via* the eastern towns Newmarket and Sixmilebridge and Dublin *via* the north eastern towns of Killaloe and Tulla.² Ennis had also road networks to towns in the west of the county as far as Kilrush, and to the north west of the county to Ennistymon, Corofin, and Kilfenora. However, in comparison to the road networks connecting towns to urban centres in the east, north and north east of the county, it appears that western and north-western roads in particular, were less developed.³ A main road from Ennis to Kilrush, linking several western towns *en route*, had yet to be built, the route used at this time was through Kildysart and Kilmurry McMahon, parishes situated along the river Shannon.⁴ Roads connecting the western

¹ *The parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland, 1844-1845* (Dublin, 1846) p. 405; Daniel Augustus Beaufort, ‘Journey through County Clare, August 1788’, in Brian O’Dalaigh (ed). *The Strangers Gaze: Travels in County Clare 1534 – 1950* (Dublin, 2004) pp 129, 130; John Curwen, ‘An Observation on Agriculture, 1813’, In Brian O’Dalaigh (ed.), *The Strangers Gaze: Travels in County Clare 1534-1950* (Dublin, 2004) p. 164.

² Taylor and Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland*, pp 92, 100-102, 202-208

³ Taylor and Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland*, pp 202-208; Ruth Dudley Edwards, *An Atlas of Irish History* (London, 1973) p. 192.

⁴ Taylor and Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland*, p. 204.

town of Kilrush with the northern towns of Kilfenora travelled *via* Cooraclare, Quilty and Ennistymon, along the north-western sea coast, which was for the most part extremely hilly, high ground, probably the most mountainous portion of roads in the county.⁵ Traveller accounts also testify to this, describing roads in north and west Clare, as being in a wild and rugged condition, seemingly quite primitive in comparison to their urban counterparts.⁶ In addition, besides the roads mentioned above, there is no road map depicting any roads north of Kilfenora or west of Kilrush (suggesting that they either were not there or not sufficiently developed to map).⁷ While it has been said that Ireland was on a par with the British Empire in terms of road development in the 1800s, these rural areas were still very much cut off from the county town of Ennis, and even more so from the national capital of Dublin, earning it the pre-eminence it obtained in the 1840s as having ‘the worst roads in the country’.⁸

The early nineteenth century did witness a significant development in transport, with the completion of navigation works on the river Shannon and bridges and roads being constructed in western areas linking in with the urban centres and providing better travel facilities for peeved tourists.⁹ From 1822 onwards, road building projects were initiated in remote regions, one of which, conducted in south-west Clare, sought to link those isolated extremities along the coastline with the market town in Kilrush.¹⁰ In 1834 tourists reported the development of new roads in the west and north of the county, in Liscannor, Kilkee and Carrigaholt, some of which were in ‘excellent condition’ in contrast to some years earlier.¹¹ The Lewis Map of 1837 also shows that new main

⁵ Taylor and Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland*, p. 205; *The parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland, 1844-1845* (Dublin, 1846) p. 403.

⁶ Daniel Augustus Beaufort, ‘Journey Through County Clare, August 1788’, p. 129; Charles Bowden, ‘A Tour of West Clare, 1791’, in Brian O’Dalaigh (ed.) *The Strangers Gaze: Travels in County Clare 1534 – 1950* (Dublin, 2004) p. 135; John Curwen, ‘Observation on Agriculture, 1813’, p. 164; John Trotter, ‘A Walk Through Clare, 1817’, in Brian O’Dalaigh (ed.) *The Strangers Gaze: Travels in County Clare 1534-1950* (Dublin, 2004) p. 167.

⁷ Taylor and Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland*, pp 202-208. This is substantiated by the oral account of Thomas Liddane, west Clare, who recollected that in the early decades of the nineteenth century there was no road linking Cross to Loop Head (a distance of fourteen kilometres). Travellers had to navigate their way to the south-western extremities via the cliffs, a dangerous commute which accordingly, claimed the lives of many. Diocesan Archives Ennis, Diocesan Papers, Fr. Michael Meehan, PP.

⁸ Edwards, *An Atlas of Irish History*, p.192; *The parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland, 1844-1845* (Dublin, 1846) p. 405.

⁹ Edwards, *An Atlas of Irish History*, p.192.

¹⁰ *CJ*, 6 August 1822. Diocesan Archives Ennis, Diocesan Papers, Fr. Malachy Duggan.

¹¹ Jonathan Binns, ‘Miseries and Beauties of Clare, 1835’, in Brian O’Dalaigh (ed.), *The Strangers Gaze: Travels in County Clare 1534 – 1950* (Dublin, 2004) p. 188; Mary John Knott, *Two Months at Kilkee*

roads were built, such as that connecting Ennis to Kilrush, while a significant network was beginning to develop in remote rural regions, such as Kilkee and Lisdoonvarna. But there were still many remote regions that had very little access to urban centres.¹² The west Clare railway much later in the century (1887) was perhaps the most significant development in communications for the countryside and granted greater accessibility to urban areas than heretofore. In the late 1850s and 1860s, railways connected Ennis to Limerick and Athenry, to be followed in the 1880s with the construction of a railway line linking Kilkee, Miltown Malbay and other provincial towns with Ennis. The development of the railway succeeded in opening up northern and western regions. While in 1846, cars were dispatched daily from the urban centre of Ennis daily to the western and northern towns of Miltown Malbay, Kildysart, Corofin and Kilrush, by 1886 the railway provided trips to these towns and others heretofore outside the main travel routes, such as Ennistymon, Lahinch, Lisdoonvarna and Kilfenora. These railway links provided greater contact with the outside world, and while a traveller to Ennis in 1846 would have been provided with a daily car service to Galway and Limerick, in 1886, four trains ran daily from the town, not just to these urban centres, but onto the Midland Great Western and Great Southern and Western Railways, meaning an even greater communication with other urban centres outside the environs of Galway and Limerick.¹³ Travel became a less daunting task, and the development of the railways succeeded in bringing both urban and rural inhabitants into greater contact with those outside their own environment.¹⁴ While fares were still high in the 1860s, the train's growing centrality in facilitating travel and conveying goods

(Ennis, 1997) p. 128. Lady Chatterton, 'Rambles, 1838', in Brian O'Dalaigh (ed.) *The Strangers Gaze: Travels in County Clare 1534-1950* (Dublin, 2004) pp 194 – 195.

¹² For example, while Lady Chatterton states that roads she encountered on her journey to the south-west were in 'excellent' conditions, the further she travelled from urban centres, she encountered roads that were only recently built, and along the coastline, these roads were 'miserable' and 'rugged'. Lady Chatterton, 'Rambles, 1838', pp 194-195. Those in the town lands of Kilclaren, Curraclon and Currakyle, Feakle, (c1870) had little access to main roads and had to wade through a river, and travelled through the mountain on horseback until the main road was reached, Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection Reel 174, Currakyle (Feakle), Leaca an Eadain, Bean Ui Innseaduain, p. 272.

¹³ *Guys Directory*, 1886; *Slaters Directory*, 1846. Travel via rail from Ennis to Limerick cost two shillings, on a third class single fare in the 1860s. *Falconer's Railway, coach, car and steam navigation guide for Ireland* (Dublin, 1863) p. 19; The prices were still exclusive at this time, but nonetheless useful for tourists, graziers, and for the locals who transported and sold agricultural foodstuffs, stock, and supplies (such as turf and coal). [1866] *Royal Commission on Railways: Evidence and papers relating to railways in Ireland*, H.C, 1866, LXIII. 279, p. 156.

¹⁴ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Appendix to the Eight Report: Minutes of Evidence and Documents relating thereto*, H.C. 1908, XLI, p. 156.

and foodstuffs can be gauged from the decline of other forms of commercial and public transportation. The numbers of those occupying the position of carmen, carriers, carters and draymen declined by approximately forty-seven per cent in the years 1871 to 1911 due to other more modern forms of transport and conveyance becoming more readily available to the rural and urban inhabitant.¹⁵

Such links facilitated a greater mobility in rural areas as the countryside was no longer turned in upon itself. This is evident in the farmer's association of good roads with prosperity. In the 1930s Arensberg and Kimball found that when arranging a match, the Clare tenant farmer asked if the house is

Near a chapel and the school, or near a town...Is it far from the road, or on it? what kind of a house is in it, slate or thatch? Are the cabins good, are they slate or thatch? If it is too far from the road, he won't take it. Backward places don't grow big fortunes.¹⁶

It became apparent to farmers in the late nineteenth century that they could no longer be remote from urban ideas. Farmers who appeared before the Land Commission attributed some of their distress to the lack of proper roads on and near their holdings, which they believed prevented them from making adequate improvements. A tenant from Bodyke complained in 1882 that the greater portion of his farm was still in a 'state of nature'. He deposed that this was because 'the place is situated two and a half miles from the public road, and it is impossible to bring manure into the place by horse and car'.¹⁷

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, farmers displayed a greater need for acquiring viable methods of transport and travel. Throughout Europe, both horses and mules, previously the preserve of the few, became a common form of transportation and agricultural power in the late nineteenth century.¹⁸ Clare followed the pattern that pertained elsewhere, the number of horses on agricultural holdings in the county increasing by approximately forty-two per cent in the forty years spanning 1851-1891 while the number of mules increased significantly by an average of ninety-two per cent

¹⁵ Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911*, SN: 3495.

¹⁶ Arensberg, *The Irish Countryman*, p. 78.

¹⁷ *CJ*, 20 November 1882.

¹⁸ David M. Sherman, *Tending Animals in the Global Village: A Guide to International Veterinary Medicine* (Philadelphia, 2002) p. 42.

in the same period.¹⁹ While mules in general were considered to be the ‘poor man’s horse’ because they were easily kept and fed, they were surprisingly resilient and stronger than donkeys and most types of horse.²⁰ They served a number of purposes on the countryside being used ‘as a plough animal, cart puller, and beast of burden, the latter especially well in difficult mountainous terrain’.²¹ This was perhaps ideally suited to the mountainous hillsides which dotted the Clare landscape particularly in the north east and south east of the county.

The emergence of more developed lines of communications and the acquisition of viable methods of transport coincided with increasing political activism in the countryside. Men who migrated to towns and emigrated to cities abroad from the post-famine period onwards, maintained greater contact with, and interest in, events at home than had been the case before. This was facilitated by the progressive modernisation of the countryside and increasing link between urban and village affairs. The development of postal communications and public transport were closely connected during the early part of the nineteenth century. As in rural France, by the 1870s ‘there were more letters, more postmen, simply more information’.²² Spurred on by the growth in local transportation, the amount of postal revenue tripled in Ennis during the period 1841 to 1851.²³ Through analysis of official papers and newspaper reports, there is evidence that Clare men abroad were utilising these advancing communication networks to further political activism at home. In 1843, O’Connell’s repeal year, guns were dispatched to farmers in Clare from Quebec, an area which had a large number of Irish and Clare immigrants.²⁴ In the 1860s, Fenianism built on such networks, and utilised various methods of transport and communication and had an extensive network both within and outside the county. That Fenianism was prominent in the towns and mobilised in the countryside is evidence of the growing link between urban and village affairs. A greater number of young men from the country who were migrating to the towns in the post-famine period - when a decline in sub-division meant sons and

¹⁹ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Agricultural Statistics Crops and Stocks, 1847-1911*, SN: 3575.

²⁰ Sherman, *Tending Animals in the Global Village*, p. 42.

²¹ Sherman, *Tending Animals in the Global Village*, p. 42.

²² Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, p. 267.

²³ Kelly, ‘Ennis in the nineteenth century’, p. 174.

²⁴ Home Office Papers, Kew, HO 44 OS 786 Part One.

daughters who were not to be portioned, to quote one farmer, 'must travel' - maintained a strong familial link with the countryside.²⁵ Dedicated leaders or 'centres' within the Fenian movement were able to maintain effective communication and co-ordination between centres at home, elsewhere in the island as far as Dublin, and abroad in England and America. Although such links coincided with growth of Irish-American nationalism, they could not have been maintained as successfully as they were without the establishment of improved communication networks in the post-famine period. The inhabitant of the rural areas, whose 'thoughts' as one Confederate rebel put it, were heretofore 'bounded by the parish in which they lived', became increasingly opened up to outside ideas.²⁶

Modernisation also witnessed the emergence of an affluent and prosperous tenantry. This period was also marked by rising living standards and improved standards of dress and health in the countryside as the aspiring middle rank farmer, in Ireland as in France, began to closely mimic his urban counterparts.²⁷ Clothes were once considered a luxury. A commission of 1822 reported that a portion of the people in south-west Clare lived in 'perfect nudity' and 'families, those who are adults and the parents, cannot come together to divine service on Sunday, but must have alternate days in order to accommodate each other with the use of their clothes'..²⁸ But changes were in motion forty years later when Coulter, on a tour of Clare in 1861, noted that there were 'indications of an improved taste and better notions on the subject of personal neatness and cleanness' which was reflected particularly in the standards of dress worn in the countryside.²⁹ Shops began to respond to and increase this growing demand by supplying cheaply manufactured goods and clothing to the rural community. Scariff, which in 1846 had only one shop of the 'meanest description', in 1861 contained 'several thriving and wealthy shopkeepers, who have set up establishments and made their fortunes within a period of ten or twelve years'. These shops stocked various goods, including, 'crinoline, hoops, and other articles of fashionable attire for the

²⁵ Arensberg and Kimball, *Family and Community*, p. 134.

²⁶ Thomas N. Brown, 'Nationalism and the Irish Peasant', *The Review of Politics* (October, 1953) p. 445.

²⁷ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, p. 166.

²⁸ *State of Ireland, Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Select Committee appointed to enquire into the disturbances in Ireland, in the last session of parliament; 13 May-18 June, 1824.*, H.C., 1825, VII 1., p. 207.

²⁹ Coulter, 'An Account of Post-Famine Clare', p. 256.

farmer's wives and their daughters'.³⁰ Through their sale of such mass-produced cheap goods, such shops surpassed the traditional crafts and trades such as dressmakers, tailors and seamstresses whose fortunes and numbers declined from the 1871 period onwards. Those occupying the position of tailors declined by an average of seventy-six percent, while the number of dressmakers fell by about seventy-seven per cent in the period 1841 to 1911. While statistics are incomplete for some years it appears that seamstresses also followed suit, the number of those occupying such positions dropping by approximately eighty-seven per cent from 1871 to 1911.³¹ Local manufacture and craft declined, replaced by mass produced goods from English industrialised cities. When a local draper opened his establishment in Ennis in the 1860s, most of his goods were obtained from Manchester.³² Years later, one observer, a member of the Gaelic League, visited a shop in North Clare, where he found 'matches from London, hop bitters from Liverpool and candles from another centre'.³³ The shops' growing acquisition of such goods reveals both the growing link between the countryside and town as well as rising material expectations among communities that had formerly been outside the ranks of consumer society.

This link was evident also in the rising standard of housing in the countryside. Up until the 1840s, good quality second and first class housing was the preserve of the few, and primarily of urban inhabitants. The bulk of fourth class houses in this period were in remote rural regions, such as the barony of Moyarta (a densely populated and poor region of south west Clare).³⁴ With modernisation and greater awareness of urban ideas came a desire on the part of the inhabitants of the countryside to emulate their urban counterparts. This growing desire on the part of the tenant farmer and labourer to emulate their urban neighbours was evident in the nature of their dress. A visitor to the county in 1884 noted that men were no longer wearing clothes associated with what he

³⁰ Coulter, 'An Account of Post-Famine Clare', p. 257.

³¹ Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911*, SN: 3495.

³² Diary of P.J. Dillon, Ennis, ms 23,423, 4 December 1866.

³³ *Clareman*, 26 June 1903.

³⁴ Fourth class houses comprised of mud cabins having only one room; the third, a better description of cottage, still built in mud, but varying from two to four rooms with windows; the second a good farm house, or in the towns, a house in a small street, having from five to nine rooms with windows and the first, all houses of a better description than the preceding ones (Taken from Census 1841), Cathal O'Connell, *The State and Housing in Ireland: Ideology, Planning and Practice* (New York, 2007) p.4; E. Margaret Crawford, *Counting the People: A Survey of the Irish Censuses, 1813-1911* (Dublin, 2003) p. 49.

considered the stereotypical Irishman, ‘the old caubeen’ and ‘the flyaway coat’, but ‘the same style of clothes as you see on the English labourer or artisan’.³⁵ This growing desire to emulate their urban social betters in standards of living was evident in the significant development in rural housing conditions from 1841 to 1891. Due to death, clearances and emigration caused by the famine, the decade after 1841 witnessed the proportion of the population residing in fourth class housing dropping from approximately 50.2 to 16.3 per cent - with the majority of the population now occupying third, rather than fourth class houses. This trend continued between the years 1861 and 1881. By the late nineteenth century, a significant shift was observable in the standard of housing in the county within the previous fifty years and approximately fifty-two per cent of the population now lived in second class housing.³⁶ Traditional crafts such as thatching declined, with more and more opting for slate houses which were more durable and comfortable. Mud, so commonly used in the building of houses which were defined as being of third and fourth class, was no longer utilised and houses were constructed with less imperishable material such as stone. Farmers opted for more rooms and windows in their houses, following patterns commonly associated with townhouses and their urban neighbours. In 1861 it was commented that only a

quarter of a century back, almost every farmer’s house in the county of Clare was built of mud, and presented a most squalid appearance. Now, snug farm houses and neat stone wall cottages are to be seen in every direction, and other indications are not wanting of the general prosperity and improved social condition of the farming classes in Ireland.³⁷

While standards of housing had improved in general, there still existed in certain parts of the countryside and in the towns those who lived in poverty. Most of these houses existed in parts of the western seaboard where there were, ‘miserable hovels in which

³⁵ Shand, *Letters from the west of Ireland 1884*, p. 166.

³⁶ Census 1851, Microfiche 44, *The Census for the year 1851 part vi: General Report*, p. Xxli; Census 1871, Microfiche 23, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 62; Census 1881, Microfiche 27, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 62; Census 1891, Microfiche 22, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 62; *Census of Ireland 1901, County Clare*, Microfiche 28, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 72

³⁷ Coulter, ‘An Account of Post-Famine Clare’, p. 265.

several families at present reside, with as many as ten a family, in houses built of sods and thatched with rushes'.³⁸ Towns became increasingly associated with poor standards of living at this time, in western centres such as Kilkee: families of up to twelve still lived in one room tenements in 1901.³⁹ In effect, standards of housing improved in the countryside and declined in the town – this reflected the general trend nationally.

While poverty could be by no means eliminated in any environment, incentives and legislation was put in place to improve living conditions in these areas. This was particularly evident in the matter of housing. The old houses, built of mud, and with thatched roofs, had few or no windows or chimneys, all of which prevented the circulation of fresh air and allowed the accumulation of dampness and dirt that in turn facilitated the spread of disease.⁴⁰ Such ill health was perhaps aggravated when we consider that animals were also kept in the house. The advancement of land purchase acts and other reforming legislation throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, allowed those in the countryside to improve their circumstances considerably. With tenant proprietary, there were signs of noticeable transition in housing conditions. A witness in the east of the county reported that on purchasing holdings, the 'magic of ownership shows itself immediately' 'I have not seen more beautiful homesteads'.⁴¹ Coupled with government incentives for tenant purchase, prizes were advanced by the county council and Department of Agriculture to those who maintained or improved their holdings or cottages.⁴² It was natural then, that when housing standards and quality of living increased so did the average life expectancy. In the period 1871-1911 the average life expectancy of a Clare man increased by approximately ten years, from 60-64 to 70-74 years of age.⁴³

Perhaps the most significant aspect of modernisation was that farmers who heretofore had little money to dispose of, became increasingly educated on the use of money and

³⁸ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL. p.139.

³⁹ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL. p. 305.

⁴⁰ Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Housing, 1821-1911*, SN: 3583.

⁴¹ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL. p. 201

⁴² *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL. pp 201, 193

⁴³ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Vital Statistics, 1864-1911*, SN: 3576.

its value. While some country areas lacked a ‘circulating medium’ in the 1820s, by the late nineteenth century even the most peripheral regions in the west of Ireland were becoming experienced in the handling of cash at this stage, as increased pressure was brought to bear on even the smallest farmer, to engage in an ever widening cash economy.⁴⁴ Since the post-famine period in Clare, more and more small farmers were using banks and services, suggesting not only that income was rising, but that such men were becoming increasingly sophisticated and well-informed about the handling of their cash. Banks were noted to be in a ‘flourishing’ condition in country towns such as Scariff and Kilrush and the number of bankers and bank services increased throughout the county.⁴⁵ Banks once centred in the principal towns of Ennis and Kilrush had branches in Kildysart, Kilkee and Killaloe, Miltown Malbay and Scariff in 1893.⁴⁶ Greater prosperity was evident in the increase in deposits in banks and post offices by 258 per cent in the thirteen years from 1881 to 1894.⁴⁷ The early years of the 1870s and the decades of the 1890s and 1900s were boom years for the Irish economy and were a period of rising expectations and standards in the Irish countryside, when increasing prosperity and growing modernity went hand in hand.⁴⁸ These years coincided with new inventions and improvements followed by the first electric light, the alarm clock and the bicycle, which though certainly not owned by all, meant that the countryside was becoming a place of modern change and rising expectations.⁴⁹ A farmer’s wife appearing before the land commission found that the recent prosperity of the 1870s gave them a way of living which they never had before.⁵⁰ With modern change and prosperity, luxuries and indulgences such as tobacco, tea and meat, which were once the preserve of a few, were now becoming more accessible.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Ciara Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board of Ireland, 1891-1923: Poverty and development in the West of Ireland* (Dublin, 2005) p. 120; Diocesan Archives Ennis, Diocesan Papers, Fr. Malachy Duggan.

⁴⁵ Coulter, ‘An Account of Post – Famine Clare’, pp 257, 262.

⁴⁶ *Guys Directory*, 1893.

⁴⁷ *Royal Commission of Inquiry into the procedure and practice and the methods of valuation followed by the land commission, the land judges court, and the civil bill courts in Ireland, and the land acts and the land purchase acts: minutes of evidence and index*, H.C. 1898, XXXV, p. 411.

⁴⁸ Barbra Lewis Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870-1903* (Cambridge, 1971) p. 120.

⁴⁹ Bernard Becker, ‘Disturbed Clare’, p. 288; Louis Cullen, ‘We are where we were’, in, *History Ireland* (November/December 2010) p. 13.

⁵⁰ *CJ*, 22 March 1883.

⁵¹ Shand, *Letters from the west of Ireland 1884*, p. 166; Ciara Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board of Ireland*, p. 164; *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883*,

A sign of the times was also indicated in the growing affluence of urban centres such as Kilrush. This became an important town for serving the needs of the rural community and its growth in trade is an indicator of the increasing rapport between residents of the town and countryside. This town surpassed Ennis as one of the most prosperous towns in the county in the late nineteenth century. Its close proximity to Limerick *via* steamer made it a popular destination for tourists *en route* to Kilkee and the west, while it also provided a valuable and prosperous trading line between the two locations. But its increasing prosperity was also stimulated by local trade. Kilrush was a prominent fair and market town and although not exceeding Ennis or Spancil Hill, it had earned a good reputation for the sale and supply of both stock and crops among the farming community. While traditional crafts and trades declined in the town, its expanding prosperity was indicated in the greater number of facilities it provided for the rural community. Kilrush had the highest proportion of public houses and shopkeepers among all the towns in the county by the late nineteenth century. In the town of Kilrush in 1871 alone, there were approximately 173 shopkeepers out of the county's total of 373. In the same year, there were approximately twenty-six public houses out of a total of ninety-seven for the county. The number of publicans and shopkeepers in the town throughout the nineteenth century despite increases, averaged at thirty per cent of the county population as a whole – a significant number serving one town.⁵²

Existing shops had also improved in quality and standards of produce since the famine period. According to one observer,

in 1846 there was scarcely a shop in the town more than 24 feet in length, and there was not one having a plate-glass window, whereas now there are twelve shops with plate glass windows, some of 30 feet in front, and over eight feet

XXXII, p. 388. *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer, Vol. IV, Ireland, Part II*, H.C., 1893 – 1894, XIX, p. 10.

⁵² Census 1871, Microfiche 23, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 87-90; Census 1881, Microfiche 26, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 88; Census 1891, Microfiche 23, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 88; *Census of Ireland 1901, County Clare*, Microfiche 29, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 97

from front to rear. These shops are well stocked with goods, varying in value from one thousand to seven thousand pounds.⁵³

The style and stature of these shops emulated the design of their continental counterparts and many were decorated in the ‘approved American style’.⁵⁴ While traditional crafts such as shoemaking, weaving and wool spinning in the town declined as they did in other centres, the number of clothes makers, dressmakers and seamstresses in the town did expand despite their general decline throughout the county.⁵⁵ Kilrush became a centre where food, clothing, farm produce and stock were bought by the rural community, becoming an important centre upon which rural society hinged in the late nineteenth century in serving the needs and standards of the rural community. Towns like Kilrush were becoming quite commercial because of the affluence and prosperity of the farming class. Proprietors of shops were ‘worth several thousand pounds, all realised within a few years in a poor looking town – a conclusive proof that farmers of the surrounding districts have plenty of money to spend’.⁵⁶ Its growing importance as a centre of trade and commerce is an indicator of the growing links between urban and rural centres.

The change evident in towns and urban centres was also apparent in the countryside. In the early nineteenth century, Clare’s rural inhabitants remained culturally and linguistically isolated from the urban population. In 1841 approximately 63.1 per cent of the population were illiterate. This illiteracy was most marked in rural areas (and areas associated with fluency in the Irish language), particularly the highly populated barony west and north west of Kilrush (Moyarta and Ibrickane), where roughly sixty and sixty-two per cent of the population could not read or write in 1841, and in the barony of the Burren (while not as populated as Moyarta or Ibrickane) approximately

⁵³ Coulter, ‘An Account of Post-Famine Clare’, p. 262.

⁵⁴ *LL*, 19 May 1897.

⁵⁵ Census 1871, Microfiche 23, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 87-90; Census 1881, Microfiche 26, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 88; Census 1891, Microfiche 23, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 88; *Census of Ireland 1901, County Clare*, Microfiche 29, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 97

⁵⁶ Coulter, ‘An Account of Post-Famine Clare’, p. 257.

sixty-seven per cent of the population could neither read nor write – the highest proportion of illiteracy in the county.⁵⁷

Civic districts and areas near urban centres showed a higher degree of literacy than their rural counterparts.⁵⁸ In comparison to rural towns and villages, larger urban centres such as Ennis had greater access to libraries and reading facilities. In the 1840s a Repeal Club and reading room was established in the town, while the following decade witnessed the establishment of clubs such as the Young Men’s Catholic Association and the Mechanic’s Institute with attached ‘select libraries’ intended to ‘promote intellectual improvement among our operatives and working men’ in the middle and lower social ranks in the town.⁵⁹ The establishment of the Town Hall in the 1860s met urban demand for literary institutes and facilities. A reading Room was established in 1866 which contained weekly newspapers such as the *London Times*, *Dublin Evening Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Limerick Chronicle*, *Clare Journal*, *Saturday Review*, *Punch*, *Good Works*, and *Leisure Hours*.⁶⁰ The provision of this type of newsprint, which was mostly English in origin and generally (though not all) loyalist in political complexion, reveals the kind of social background and political affiliations of the clientele who frequented these reading rooms. Such newspapers were alien to the majority of the inhabitants of Ennis who at that time were subscribing and frequently corresponding to the nationalist newspaper, the *Irishman*, Dublin, and the *Irish People* in New York.⁶¹ In the late 1860s, following the popularity of Fenianism, more time now seemed to be dedicated to the discussion and showcasing of material of a nationalist nature. An existing poster of the lectures of Stephen Joseph Meany on the ‘Poems and Poets of Ireland’ which were staged throughout Ireland in the 1870s featured discussions of poets such as Charles Gavan Duffy, Lady Wilde, Ingram, Clarence Mangan and Dowling.⁶² However, while these lecture series were reported to have attracted wide audiences throughout Clare, they were perhaps limited to a certain number and class. While the issues which they

⁵⁷ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Literacy, 1841-1911*, SN: 3582.

⁵⁸ Civic Districts in 1841 had approximately 6,986 illiterate male and females of a total of 16, 207, or 43 per cent. Rural districts in 1841, had an illiteracy rate of about 149, 561 out of a total rural population of 248, 188 – or 60 per cent. This was out of a county average of approximately 63 per cent. It appears that the barony of the Islands, Ennis, and barony of Tulla lower, near Limerick, had the lowest percentage of illiteracy in the county in 1841.

⁵⁹ *CJ*, 18 October 1855, 19 May 1856, 6 February 1860.

⁶⁰ *CJ*, 2 April 1866.

⁶¹ *Irishman*, 25 August, 10 September 1866; *Irish People* (New York), 10 November 1866.

⁶² Fenian Papers, Box Twelve, 6023R; 5979R.

discussed were certainly more popular, these social events were, like their loyal counterparts some years previously, still very exclusive. Those who attended the lectures seem to have been primarily affluent middle class men and professionals, such as Stephen Clancy a boot and shoe merchant and Patrick Molony, pawnbroker, who organised the lecture in Ennis in 1869.⁶³ The exclusive nature of these lectures was aggravated by their distance from the countryside. Travel to the towns required much preparation, and often, those who travelled to these urban centres would have had to plan the day in advance. This is clear from the account of one voter in Feakle, East Clare who in 1880 was obliged to borrow a horse, employ help and leave at an early hour to attend the polling booths in Ennis, a distance of nineteen miles.⁶⁴ In addition, these lectures sometimes charged attendants a substantial entrance fee. The tickets for Mrs O'Donovan Rossa's and Stephen Joseph Meany's lecture series in 1869 and in 1870 both ranged from sixpence to two shillings, which at this time about a half to two days work for a labourer.⁶⁵ It was therefore apparent that such lectures were still quite outside the means of the working class man, agricultural labourer and even middle-rank farmer, and it was until not the latter half of the nineteenth century that lectures, dramas, plays and literary meetings would become more affordable to the working class and accessible to those removed from urban towns. For example, branches of the Gaelic League established at approximately fifty-nine locations throughout the county in the ten years between 1899 and 1909 had a much more reasonable fee of ten shillings per year, and books were provided without charge. This annual fee was the equivalent of about five days work for a labourer (in 1906), however some branches in order to induce members, were known to reduce or even completely waive subscription fees.⁶⁶

Clare had a rich oral culture that persisted at small town and village level, until the latter half of the nineteenth century. The presence of such a dominant oral tradition up until the 1850s, in conjunction with the information acquired from census statistics, reveals that illiteracy was still quite common. In the absence of literacy it was oral

⁶³ *CJ*, 29 March, 5 April, 7, 19 October, 16 December 1869.

⁶⁴ *CI*, 10 July 1880.

⁶⁵ Fenian Papers, Box Twelve, 6023R; 5979R. *Reports from Poor Law Inspectors on the wages of Agricultural Labourers in Ireland*, H.C., 1870, XIV.1, p. 20.

⁶⁶ *CC*, 13 April 1907; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland with a detailed report on agriculture for year 1906*, H.C. 1908, CXXI, p. 152; *Clareman*, 14 March 1903; *LL*, 12 February 1900. Wages in 1906 (for men) average at one shilling ten pence per day

culture that permeated rural life. Before literacy, information from the outside world was supplemented by travelling ballad singers, hawkers or vendors who often crowded the busy streets of Ennis or Kiltrush in an attempt to sell their wares. Ballad singers and hawkers roamed the countryside during times of heightened political activity, informing or misinforming the local population on various political events and facilitating rural politicisation. Much of this material was considered by the authorities as seditious, perhaps because of its cheap price, accessibility and subversive political sentiment. At periods of political excitement ballad singers were conspicuous throughout the county, informing the local population on all the latest political events and news. At election time, ballad singers roved the principal streets of the county, selling ballads which lauded or defamed various contesting political candidates.⁶⁷ In other instances, they sought to inform the local population of celebratory nationalist political events, such as that following the passage of the disestablishment bill. In reaction to the occasion the streets of Ennis, were patrolled by a pair of itinerant ballad singers who, with the green scarves they wore and their ‘vocalism’, according to the local press, succeeded in drawing a ‘crowd of people after them’.⁶⁸ Attracting the attention of crowds gathering on a fair and market day, in Killaloe at the same time, ballad singers commending the initiator of the Disestablishment Bill with shouts of: ‘Hurrah for Gladstone’.⁶⁹ Songs, whether to the air of a lively march or more sombre lament, had the capacity to arouse local opinions and in some instances, inflame political attitudes. During the arrest of a number of Fenian suspects in the county in the 1860s, songs of very varied background like Davis’s ‘Green above the Red’ and the American ‘John Browne’ were interpreted by the rural population as songs of defiance and resistance.⁷⁰ When encountering the authorities, singers often changed the words to the airs of these songs, or in other instances, their proceedings attracted the support of large crowds which make it impossible for constables to arrest them. Such was the case in Nenagh, county Tipperary, when two boys were cautioned by the constabulary for playing the songs on the concertina, crowds gathered and defiantly resisted the authorities calling on the

⁶⁷ *Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator*, 10 April 1857. Inchiquin Papers (National Library of Ireland), Collection 143, ms. 45, 429/6.

⁶⁸ *CJ*, 2 August 1869.

⁶⁹ Fenian Papers, Box Seven, 4487R.

⁷⁰ *CJ*, 4 February 1867, 17 August 1868.

young boys for ‘O’Donnell Abu’ and joined in the chorus.⁷¹ These nationalist tunes became a common form of local anti-police protest and in many instances acted as weapons with which to challenge the law. Anti-police songs such as ‘The Peeler and the Goat’, and ‘Harvey Duff’ were popular songs in Clare which were sung with the intention of aggravating the constabulary. On one occasion, in Kilkishen, on the day of the marriage of a local policeman some of the ‘boys of the town amused themselves in the evening by singing “Harvey Duff” and the “Peeler and the Goat”’. Although the constable stated in court that ‘the music did not annoy him one bit’, he nonetheless attacked the youths in a house, leading to a *melée* in which swords, stools and weights were used, resulting in cut noses and bloody heads.⁷² Song names were also used to identify individuals whose resistance the authorities had given them prominence locally. For instance, the popular song ‘Rory of the Hill’ was the nickname given to a publican named Hillary of Miltown Malbay who was one of those arrested for refusing to supply goods to Hannah Connell and her servants in 1888.⁷³ In the absence of literature, such songs were the medium through which to interpret the rural population’s political loyalties.

The decline in the oral tradition from 1851 onwards corresponded with increasing literacy. There was a significant network established by ballad singers with Clare and other western counties in the post-famine period, but while the census recorded four ballad singers in the county in 1851 there were very few listed hereafter, though they were probably present but listed as something other than ‘ballad singer’.⁷⁴ By the 1880s, the ballad singer was no longer a prominent feature of Clare society. Ironically, it was a newspaper, the *Clare Advertiser* which lamented the demise of the ballad singer: ‘Time was when ballad singers were a powerful institution in the country. Like

⁷¹ *LR*, 29 May 1868.

⁷² *CI*, 9 February 1884.

⁷³ Songs also commemorated others in the town that were complicit in the boycott, such as ‘Three Brave Blacksmiths’. *CJ*, 6, 13 February 1888. CO903/1 p. 13; John Walsh, *Patrick Hillery: The Official Irish Biography* (Dublin, 2008) p. 7.

⁷⁴ Maura Murphy, ‘The ballad singer and the role of the seditious ballad in nineteenth century Ireland’, *Ulster Folklife*, 1979, p. 84; Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911*, SN: 3495.

many other remarkable changes...the sturdy 'traveller' as they wished to be called, is fast fading from market, fair and pattern.'⁷⁵

By 1891, Clare's illiteracy rate had dropped to roughly 19.2 per cent.⁷⁶ It had declined steadily in the decade since 1841, dropping from 63.1 to 19.2 per cent. The greatest decrease occurred, in the period 1851-1861, when illiteracy levels dropped by about 60 per cent to 47 per cent in 1861. This decrease was felt in rural areas such as Moyarta, south west Clare, where the number of those unable to read and write dropped significantly in this period (witnessing an overall decline in illiteracy of over approximately fifty per cent between 1841 and 1861. From 1861 onwards, illiteracy decreased in the county by an average of ten per cent each decade to 19.2 in 1891. By this time, the majority of the population could be considered literate, with seventy-two percent of both the male and female population recorded as being able to read and write. This literacy was particularly obvious amongst the young and was an example of rising standards of education across the county generally. While census statistics are incomplete, it is easy to find a discernable trend in the rising standards of education between the years 1871-1911. The younger generation were becoming more educated and literate, while illiteracy was becoming associated with the old. Illiterate young people between the ages of twelve and nineteen years in 1871, numbered some 4,080 males and females, i.e. fifteen percent of that age cohort. Forty years later, of the 14,723 individuals aged between eleven and seventeen in 1911, only 156 (males and females included) were illiterate – a mere one percent of the age cohort. The adult age group also witnessed a decline in illiteracy, and while 8,771 (twenty-six percent) of those aged between twenty and thirty-nine years in 1871 were illiterate, by 1911 only 796 (or three percent of the whole age cohort of males and females) were illiterate. By 1911, the highest illiteracy rate was in the over forty year age group, and the illiteracy rate in this group dropped from fifty-four to seventeen percent since 1871, the total number of illiterate people over fort falling from 23, 869 to 6,222.

These rising literacy levels witnessed a growing consumption of newsprint in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Such newsprint was pivotal in moulding the political opinions of the newly literate rural and small town population. These newspapers were

⁷⁵ *Clare Advertiser* (cited hereafter as *CA*), 7 January 1882.

⁷⁶ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Literacy, 1841-1911*, SN: 3582.

primarily nationalist, ranging from constitutional to militant, and were indications of a newly emerging politicised class. The great majority of these newspapers came into being after the 1870s, largely induced by the abolition of stamp duties.⁷⁷ In the latter half of the nineteenth century there seem to have been at least eleven newspapers in circulation throughout the county, two published in Kilrush and nine in the town of Ennis.⁷⁸ The number of newspapers and vendors reached their peak in 1881, when economic distress proved a catalyst for political involvement and political journalism. Census returns from 1881 showed that the number of newspaper authors, editors and journalists had increased since 1871.⁷⁹ The number of newspaper vendors and agents also witnessed an increase between the years 1881 and 1911.⁸⁰

Local newspapers were becoming more stridently nationalist. Previous to this, Clare newsprint was more moderate in tone and generally the reflection of the tastes and political opinions of the gentry's class.⁸¹ For example, the Tory Unionist newspapers, the *Clare Journal* and *Ennis Chronicle*, the Whig Unionist the *Clare Freeman*, and the liberal *Clare Pilot*. However, the latter part of the nineteenth century witnessed a significant shift in the nature of political opinion and of the eleven newspapers in operation throughout the period, seven were nationalist in their political sympathies. Even those which were not nationalist, such as the *Clare Journal*, seemed to sublimate their political opinions in order to obtain as wide a readership as possible. In the early part of the century it was decidedly Tory conservative newspaper, but by the late nineteenth century, the *Journal* was defined by the constabulary as a very 'neutral' paper.⁸² Its transformation from staunchly conservative to neutral is a reflection of the changing political complexion of the town and countryside, when political opinion was becoming increasingly identified with popular nationalism. In comparison to some fifty years previously, the abolition of stamp duties made these nationalist newspapers more

⁷⁷ Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, p. 172

⁷⁸ Kilrush: *Clare Advertiser and Kilrush Gazette*, (1856), *Kilrush Herald and Kilkee Gazette* (1877). Ennis, *Clare Freeman and Ennis Gazette* (1853), *Clare Independent and Tipperary Catholic Times* (1875), *Clare Journal* (1778), *Clare man* (1896), *Clare Weekly News* (1878), *Independent* (1882), *Saturday Record* (1885), *Clare Pilot* (1860), *Clare Examiner and Limerick Advertiser* (1878)

⁷⁹ Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911*, SN: 3495. There were approx three in 1871, eight in 1881, three in 1891, eleven in 1901, and seven in 1911.

⁸⁰ Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911*, SN: 3495. There were approximately two in 1871, eight in 1881, three in 1891 eleven in 1901 and seven in 1911.

⁸¹ For example, the Tory Unionist newspapers the *Clare Journal* (1778) and *Ennis Chronicle* (1784) the Whig Unionist paper the *Clare Freeman* and *Ennis Gazette* in 1853, and the 'liberal' *Clare Pilot*.

⁸²CBS, 876/S; CBS, 824/S; CBS, 838/S.

accessible and available to the public. The *Clare Journal*, which was the longest running and most prominent newspaper in the first half of the nineteenth century retailed at one penny in the early 1800s, a price which was quite prohibitive, considering that a labourer only earned less than six pence a day.⁸³ In the latter part of the century however, nationalist newsprint was quite affordable for the labourer or working class individual. The *Clare Advertiser* retailed at three pence, the *Kilrush Herald and Kilkee Gazette* at two pence, while other national newspapers which were widely read in the county were the *Irishman* (two pence) and *The Nation* (one penny), all at a time when a labourer's daily wage was one shilling and two pence per day.⁸⁴

It is difficult to gauge newspaper distribution and readership in the countryside. Local and national newspapers were passed around and loaned to friends and neighbours. The proprietor of the *Clare Advertiser* agreed to loan newspapers to the residents in the main streets of the town, which would ensure a 'positive relief to those paying subscribers who will then be enabled to read their paper without the irritating interruptions of respectable borrowers'.⁸⁵ A similar system was in place for the *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*, where Irish-Americans posted used copies or subscriptions to friends and relatives at home.⁸⁶ The *Irish World* was in such demand it was often distributed after mass, or read aloud to those who could not acquire the newspaper themselves.⁸⁷ It is also impossible to gauge the areas where newspapers were sold. Although census returns show the number of newspaper vendors in operation in 1881 as eight, it was evident there were a lot more, considering that newsprint was sold in public houses, grocery shops and by artisans on their premises. While there are

⁸³ Kelly, 'Ennis in the nineteenth century', p. 207.

⁸⁴ *Reports from Poor Law Inspectors on the wages of Agricultural Labourers in Ireland*, H.C., 1870, XIV.1, p. 20.

⁸⁵ CA, 7 January 1882.

⁸⁶ The *Irish World* was founded in New York in 1870 by the Irish-American propagandist and anglophobe Patrick Forde. It was, along with the *Gaelic American*, 'for nearly fifty years the source from which a majority of Irish-Americans took their political lead'. The newspaper's title was expanded in 1878 to become the *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*. Robert A. Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (London, 1983), p. 322.

⁸⁷ *Irish World*, 27 December 1879, Residents in Ohio, wrote to the newspaper requesting to exchange old copies of the *Irish World* for the *Clare Journal* or *advertiser*. For more examples see, *Irish World*, 7 April, 2 October, 27 November 1880, 15 January, 19 February, 9 April 1881. Recipients of the *Irish World* in Clare came from Kilmihil, Newmarket, Ennis, Mountshannon, Feakle, Kilkee and as far west as Carrigaholt and Cross. Since there were limited copies of the newspaper, volunteers in these areas were responsible for distributing the newspaper to those who wished to borrow it, collecting it, and passing it on to the next reader etc. *Irish World*, 15 January 1881, 4 December 1880.

only eleven newspaper vendors recorded for the period 1901, the *Limerick Leader* was distributed in fourteen locations, mostly shop premises in locations stretching from Killaloe to Kilkee.⁸⁸ These newspapers were circulated in Lisdoonvarna and Ennistymon, north Clare, in Kilrush, Miltown Malbay, Lahinch and Kilkee, west Clare, in Sixmilebridge, Newmarket-on-Fergus and Killaloe, east Clare, and in the principal town of Ennis. The distributors were primarily shopkeepers, grocers, newsagents, publicans, and in one instance, a watchmaker. Half of the distributors however, were young shop assistants, many of them female: they included John Madigan, Ennistymon, (aged 20 years), Miss M. Carmody, Quin, (aged 19), Miss Mary Keane, Ennis, (aged 25), Mary Hassett, Kilrush, (aged 34), and Joseph Honan, Miltown Malbay (aged 19). With the nationalist newsprint reaching its peak in the late nineteenth century, this newly emerging young literate generation would become more interested in politics than ever before.⁸⁹

The late nineteenth century witnessed a growing print culture in the countryside. Placards and posters became conspicuous outside church doors and shop windows, penetrating the most remote regions of the county. Coinciding with political events or meetings, posters and patriotic leaflets were disseminated throughout the countryside in a bid to mobilise popular support. In the 1860s, pro-Fenian and Amnesty placards were heavily circulated by the IRB throughout towns such as Ennis, Kilrush and Ennistymon.⁹⁰ An ever widening literate public and an expansion in printing facilities from the 1880s saw an increased circulation of printed and patriotic material throughout the county. Printed matter was disseminated, coinciding with every conceivable political event. Posters and seditious leaflets were circulated in response to meetings of the Land League, the Queen's Jubilee, and commemorations ranging from those for the Manchester Martyrs to local Fenian funerals, at tournaments of the GAA and meetings connected with the successive Amnesty campaigns. Such literature was circulated throughout town and countryside in areas where large crowds gathered. Thus, Pro-Boer placards were posted up in 1900 (probably by local IRB men) in Ennistymon, at the

⁸⁸Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911*, SN: 3495; LL, 11 April 1898

⁸⁹Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, p. 175.

⁹⁰Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/4; CJ, 4 November 1869.

Church pier, in Kilrush at the Market House and in several locations throughout Ennis.⁹¹ Similar placards were also delivered house to house in Ennis, coinciding with the Queen's visit in 1901.⁹² It was understood that 'a general distribution of those leaflets are [sic] taking place through every town, every village, and every county in Ireland'.⁹³ In other words, such propaganda was difficult to avoid. Its widespread availability and dissemination among a newly literate rural as well as urban audience meant that it was an important factor in shaping to the political complexion of provincial society.

Where was this print material procured? Most of the posters circulated in Clare at this time came from Dublin and were distributed via local wholesalers. Hawkers travelled through the countryside spreading information outside the periphery of the towns. In 1858, a travelling hawker sold banned copies of the Dublin *Moore's Almanac* in Ennistymon, which he had bought from a wholesale dealer in Kilrush.⁹⁴ The book was later banned for its 'seditious' content, which predicted the coming of a Messiah – to whom 'the Royal David alluded' – who would signal the collapse of law and order and the downfall of the landocracy.⁹⁵ This type of literature undoubtedly appealed to those on the margins of society, who were inspired by the idea that one day, the existing social order would reverse, with those occupying the lower ranks of society replacing those at the top (in this case, this upper class was represented as corrupt magistrates, police, and landlords). This millenarian literature, while similar to later nationalist propaganda (in that it too predicted an unrealistic social change), was increasingly replaced by such productions from the post-famine period onwards. Furthermore, this new popular nationalist print relied on more modern and utilised new networks of transport and communication. Railway stations became focal points for the spread of radical ideas (it was on the train from Bray to Dublin that T.D. Sullivan first heard his song *God Save Ireland* sung) and were places where both the urban and rural populace

⁹¹ C.S.O.R.P, 1900. 15483.

⁹² CBS, 2 September 1900, 22812/S. CBS, 25 September 1900, 22842/S; CBS, 19 December 1900, 23178/S.

⁹³ CBS, 2 September 1900, 22812/S. CBS, 25 September 1900, 22842/S; CBS, 19 December 1900, 23178/S.

⁹⁴ *CJ*, 4 February 1858; 16 August 1858.

⁹⁵ *CJ*, 4 February 1858; 16 August 1858.

converged.⁹⁶ In Limerick city, the ballads of Cameron and Ferguson were circulated at the railway station. These nationalist ballads, (such as ‘Who Fears to Speak’, ‘Wolfe Tone’ and ‘Up for the Green’), were printed on white manuscript paper, bearing a green flag, with ‘God save Ireland’ on the staff and featuring the national symbols of the Celtic cross, harp and sunburst.⁹⁷ The ballads were the size of a postcard, and were often used for that very purpose, thus facilitating the spread of such ideals.⁹⁸ Such literature was also distributed by boat and by car at this time – making it much easier for such material to be disseminated to wider audience than ever before. While some of this material emanated from outside the county, principally from Dublin and Limerick, some material was printed locally. From the eighteenth century Clare had four printing presses, and prior to this business was mostly supplemented by travelling printing presses.⁹⁹ While it is unknown how many printing presses were in Clare in the late nineteenth century, the number of printers listed in the census coincided with economic distress and increased literacy, reaching its peak in 1881.¹⁰⁰ This expansion in printing contributed to the increase in the number of placards and printed notices circulating in the county. Some of the placards in support of the Boers seized in Clarecastle in 1900 were received in an envelope bearing the London post mark though it was alleged that they were actually printed in Ennis ‘as there were plenty through the country’.¹⁰¹ It appears from most of the evidence that the printing of such material was encouraged by enterprising newspaper journalists and proprietors and was, by extension, part of the ‘print revolution’ occurring throughout the countryside from the 1870s onwards. A former magistrate arrested with boycotting notices in his possession in Kildysart had got them printed in Limerick, supposedly at the offices of the *Limerick Leader*.¹⁰² Printers and newspaper proprietors of the *Kilrush Herald* and *Clare Independent*, both came under constabulary suspicion for their supposed role in encouraging agrarian

⁹⁶ Fenian Papers, Box Twelve, 6314R; T.D. Sullivan, *Recollections of Troubled Times in Irish Politics* (Dublin, 1905) p. 178

⁹⁷ Fenian Papers, Box Twelve, 6314R.

⁹⁸ Fenian Papers, Box Twelve, 6314R.

⁹⁹ Earnest Reginald McClintock Dix, *List of books, newspapers and pamphlets printed in Ennis Co Clare in the eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1912) pp 7-8.

¹⁰⁰ Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911*, SN: 3495. Clare had employed what appears to have been thirteen printers in 1841, nineteen printers in 1851, twenty nine printers in 1861, seventeen printers in 1871, forty-three printers in 1881, nineteen printers in 1891, twenty three printers in 1901 and thirty three printers in 1911.

¹⁰¹ C.S.O.R.P, 1900. 15483.

¹⁰² CBS, 1892, 4684.

outrage, as well as printing nationalist notices and cards and tenant farmers who circulated ‘violent and threatening notices’ in the countryside were ‘suspected’ of having ‘got the notices written in Ennis by some person connected with the press’.¹⁰³

The decline of the Irish language also seems to have heralded greater politicisation in Clare, just as in France, where the decline of quite separate French dialects and customs witnessed a growing susceptibility to national republican attitudes.¹⁰⁴ While the Irish language was still spoken fluently in remote regions in Clare throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, a growing knowledge of the English language – particularly among the younger generation – witnessed a growing national awareness as rural political attitudes became identified with national affairs. A traveller to west Clare on behalf of the Gaelic League in the early twentieth century observed that Irish was still spoken by the older generation. However, he acknowledged, it was likely to decline with them since many, associating the language with backwardness and poverty, were loathe to pass it on to their young.¹⁰⁵ Influenced by some of these perceptions and in an attempt to adapt to a new culture, the Irish language had been drastically declining since the post-famine period, particularly in areas closest to Limerick, which were more susceptible to the English language, such as the baronies of Tulla (Upper and Lower) and Bunratty (Upper and Lower). In 1851, these baronies had the lowest Irish speaking population, numbering some 13,289 Irish speaking males of a total population of 34,161 (or 38 per cent). The west of the county, particularly the barony of Moyarta, stretching from the west of Kilrush to Loop Head (the extreme south west of Clare), had the most populated Irish speaking region of the county, with approximately 12,185 of 16,075 males speaking Irish only in 1851 (75 per cent). The north west of the county, occupying the barony of the Corocmore (Kilfenora, Liscannor etc), while not as populated as Moyarta, maintained roughly 7,848 Irish male speakers in 1851 out of a total of 9,562 (or 82 per cent) in 1851. These areas (stretching from the Burren to Loop

¹⁰³ CSORP 1882. 32122; *CJ*, 17 April 1882; *CJ*, 8 December 1893; Home Office Papers, Kew, HO 144-72-A19.

¹⁰⁴ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, pp 67-94.

¹⁰⁵ *Conradh na Gaelige: Annual Report of the Gaelic League, 1901-1902, and proceedings of Ard-fheis* (Dublin, 1902), p. 49.

Head) were the last to be affected by the move to the English and this change seems to have coincided with population decline in these areas.¹⁰⁶

While areas with developed networks of communication, particularly in the east of the county stretching from Limerick to Ennis, were quickly penetrated by linguistic changes, the most remote and isolated south western and north western regions still spoke Irish only. In contrast to these English speaking areas, Irish was generally associated with the poorest economy while wealthy and prosperous regions were primarily English speaking – apparent in the contrast between the Irish speaking small holdings of the south-west with the English speaking grazing and pastoral regions of East and Mid Clare. However, modernisation precipitated change and the Irish language declined as improving education, rising prosperity and better methods of communication facilitated the spread and adaptation of English as the main language. The construction of improved networks and developments in transport in the post-famine period correlated with the increasing decline of the Irish language in western and south western areas. With tenant farmers and small holders seeking to improve their lot through their membership of the Land League and United Irish League, many of these small holdings regions had to adopt the language of politics at an early stage. Education also facilitated change and unsurprisingly, it was the young men at this time who mostly spoke English. As late as the 1860s, travellers in west and North Clare were unable to communicate with the locals and had to be assisted by young local guides, who were able to speak English as well as Irish.¹⁰⁷ The majority of Irish speakers appear to have been in their forties and fifties in 1861 and in their early eighties in 1881, which suggests that by then the language was almost certainly associated with the older generation.¹⁰⁸ This is substantiated by Ní Chiosáin's study of south-west Clare which has shown that by 1891, even in those predominantly strong Irish speaking regions (such as in the barony of Moyarta) numbers of monoglot Irish speakers were considerably low, and were becoming identified as being associated with the elderly,

¹⁰⁶ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Language, 1851-1911*, SN: 3573.

¹⁰⁷ Knott, *Two Months at Kilkee*, p.129; William Barry, 'A Walking Tour, 1864', in O'Dalaigh (ed.), *The Strangers Gaze: Travels in County Clare 1534-1950* (Dublin, 2004) p. 275.

¹⁰⁸ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Language, 1851-1911*, SN: 3573.

who were for the most part, women.¹⁰⁹ In comparison to their elderly female counterparts, young men were now becoming increasingly susceptible to nationalist politicisation and were more conscious of national affairs now that they were speaking the language of commerce, politics and business. These age groups became prominent in nationalist movements from the Fenian movement to the United Irish League, as mobilisers and agitators.

The growing modernisation of the countryside in the late nineteenth century meant that the traditions of the county had changed. Old stories, histories and superstition historically associated with lack of education and religious uniformity had declined, and were not as common among the local people in the 1890s as they were some years previous. In the 1860s and 1870s Westropp had heard endless stories from ‘fishermen and donkey boys’ which were totally forgotten in the 1890s.¹¹⁰ Witchcraft and charms, firmly believed in by the local population, did not excite as much interest or entertain any beliefs in the later nineteenth century.¹¹¹ Patterns and popular festivals were ‘not near so frequent as the days of yore’ and became mostly subsumed into popular festivals or Catholic pilgrimage.¹¹²

But the decline of these superstitions ‘owed less to the continued opposition of the authorities of the Catholic church than to changes in the outlook and aspirations of the Catholic laity as greater prosperity brought with it an increased openness to outside influences and new standards of propriety and respectability’.¹¹³ In the Clare context, the displacement of oral tradition and folk belief among the young was facilitated by a growing national consciousness and rising standards of education among the rural population. Newly emerging educated young men departed from the customs and traditions of the older generation. Information on old charms, and superstitions, although still in circulation, were not as popular and were primarily held on to by the

¹⁰⁹ Máire Ní Choisáin, ‘The Irish language in county Clare in the early twentieth century: A census based perspective’, In Matthew Lynch and Patrick Nugent (eds), *Clare History and Society* (Dublin, 2008) pp 509, 510.

¹¹⁰ Thomas J. Westropp, Clare, ‘Folktales and Myths’, *Folklore*, (Sept, 1913) p. 206

¹¹¹ *CJ*, 5 November 1860.

¹¹² *CA*, 7 January 1887; Thomas J. Westropp, ‘A Folklore Survey of County Clare’, *Folklore*, (September 1911), p. 334.

¹¹³ S.J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland 1780-1845* (New York, 1982) p. 276

‘old people’.¹¹⁴ For the younger generation who possessed such traditions, these beliefs were replaced and doctored to accommodate a wider audience. While up until the 1880s, the county was considered inward looking and remote - according to an observer, ‘a Limerick man to the poor un-travelled folk of Clarecastle, of Kilrush and Kilbaha is a stranger’ – this was set to change.¹¹⁵ Increasing tourism precipitated by developments in travel and communications succeeded in ‘opening up’ these remote regions. With increasing tourism, the cultures of the local population changed. While in the pre-famine period, Irish was the usual language spoken by the people of west Clare, the increasing popularity of tourists resorts such as Kilkee, meant a greater number of the population in close proximity of the town were beginning to speak English. It has been said that the Irish scholar, Eugene O’Curry, learned his English by travelling into Kilkee during the summer to hear the language.¹¹⁶ Increasing tourism also witnessed a decline in the old localism, customs and beliefs of the rural population which now became geared to a wider audience to attract business.¹¹⁷ In West Clare, ‘there were some belief in mer-folk in Kilkee before 1879, but it has nowadays got touched up for tourists’.¹¹⁸ This was mostly adopted by canny young men who sought to benefit from the visits of affluent tourists.¹¹⁹ Many of the old traditions and stories in East Clare were ‘falsified’ by ‘young men guides.... for the benefits of tourists’.¹²⁰ Some decades later, it was reported that in Killarney, the boatmen and jarveys gained notoriety during tourist seasons for their abilities to market exaggerated versions of old stories and superstition to unsuspecting tourists.¹²¹

The impression one gets is that in the late nineteenth century many local stories and oral histories were ‘affected’ by ‘modern changes’.¹²² While tourism and a decline in

¹¹⁴ Thomas J. Westropp, ‘A Folklore Survey of County Clare’, *Folklore*, (March, 1912) p. 56

¹¹⁵ Bernard Becker, ‘Disturbed Clare, 1880’, p. 288.

¹¹⁶ Diocesan Archives Ennis, Diocesan Papers, ‘Parishes of Moyarta and Kilballyowen’, Fr. Malachy Duggan.

¹¹⁷ Tourism to the west certainly increased with the development of the west Clare (1887) and south-west Clare railway (1892) and the growing availability of travel via boat. Newspapers advertisements appealed to this rising demand, advertising package trips and Sunday excursions with the Royal Mail and the Lower Shannon Steamship Shannon Company, from Limerick to Kilrush. *MN*, 5, 9, 12, June 1886; *Guy’s Directory*, 1893

¹¹⁸ Thomas J. Westropp, ‘A Folklore Survey of County Clare’, *Folklore* (September 1910) p. 342

¹¹⁹ W.M Thackeray, *The Irish Sketch Book* (Dublin, reprint 1990) p. 322

¹²⁰ Thomas J. Westropp, Clare, ‘Folktales and Myths’, *Folklore*, (Sept, 1913) p. 371

¹²¹ George Denis Zimmerman, *The Irish Storyteller* (Dublin, 2001) p. 157.

¹²² Thomas J. Westropp, Clare, ‘Folktales and Myths’, *Folklore*, (Sept, 1913) p. 369

traditional beliefs facilitated by education, had undoubtedly contributed to this, one of the ‘modern changes’ that affected local memory was nationalism.¹²³ These types of stories were considered by folklorist Thomas J. Westropp as ‘modern’ and ‘ill attested’, such as the story he heard in north Clare in 1890, which told of a fictional battle engaged in by local heroes in the area against the ‘English’ in the twelfth century.¹²⁴ Nationalism permeated local memory in the late nineteenth century, reflecting the growing politicisation of the small farming and labouring classes, who were primarily the repositories of this oral culture.¹²⁵ In the 1890s a story in Kilkishen was rehashed to reflect a nationalist ideology. The story told of how a man named Síoda, once banished to a lake for eternity with his horse, now ‘sleeps beneath the waters, not to waken until summoned for the final battle for the independence of Ireland’. These stories became affected by modern political changes and old folktales of the ‘Ulstermen’, when recollected by local nationalists, metamorphosed into tales of Orangemen.¹²⁶

While the decline of the language and oral culture facilitated politicisation, so too did the introduction of new legislation such as the Education Act. From its beginnings in the 1830s, there was much opposition to the National School system because of its policy on mixed religious education. Until the middle of the nineteenth century there was a strong suspicion on the part of many clergy and people as to the type of religious instruction given in these schools.¹²⁷ In the 1850s, which witnessed the entry into the county of a number of Protestant scripture readers, there was a frequent protest against evangelicalism and the ethos of some of these primary schools, the most concerted and publicised campaign being launched by Father Meehan in Kilbaha, south west Clare.¹²⁸ The fact that hedge schools were still in operation at this time attests to the fact that there was still a strong distrust of the religious ethos of national schools.¹²⁹ However, according to the local press, these fears seemed to have faded after the mid 1850s, a period in which sectarian animosities, so characteristic of the previous few years, were declining: ‘so much in advance of the youth of twenty years ago are these of the present

¹²³ Zimmerman, *The Irish Storyteller*, p. 289

¹²⁴ Thomas J. Westropp, Clare, ‘Folktales and Myths’, *Folklore*, (Sept, 1913) p. 375.

¹²⁵ Zimmerman, *The Irish Storyteller*, p. 274.

¹²⁶ Thomas J Westropp, Clare, ‘Folktales and Myths’, *Folklore*, (Sept, 1913) pp 369, 377.

¹²⁷ Kelly, ‘Ennis in the nineteenth century’, pp 138, 140.

¹²⁸ *CJ*, 11 September, 16 October, 18 October, 6 November, 1851, 2 February, 3 May, 26 August 1852.

See also Diocesan Archives Ennis, Diocesan Papers, Fr. Michael Meehan, PP.

¹²⁹ *CJ*, 10 February 1851.

age that few are now sceptical of the superior advantages of the national system of education'.¹³⁰ With the increasing influence of the Catholic hierarchy and the emergence of a Catholic bourgeoisie, the political and religious character of these schools changed. In Ennis, the involvement of the regular clergy and Christian Brothers or religious sisters in the educational field had increased to such an extent that religion and education went hand in hand.¹³¹ In 1893, there were a number of religious orders in the county: the Franciscan Convent in Ennis, the Sisters of Mercy Convents in Ennis, Ennistymon, Kilkee and Kilrush, and the Christian Brothers in Ennis, Ennistymon and Kilrush.¹³²

Since many of the clergy and religious orders were associated with popular political causes in the late nineteenth century, their influence was felt in the nationalist aspect of these schools. In Richmond N.S, Corofin, pupils from an early age were instilled with a strong Catholic nationalist ethos. Some books in use included Roman Catholic catechisms, each carefully decorated with a frontispiece of O'Connell.¹³³ The Christian Brothers produced their own history books, and that subject was taught from a specifically 'nationalist point of view'.¹³⁴ One of those responsible for producing the history textbooks used in the curriculum was a Christian Brother from Ennistymon, who was known for his intensely nationalist views and sympathies with Fenianism.¹³⁵ Such books used by the Christian Brothers in Ennistymon and elsewhere were criticised by the National School board who commented that they were 'not suited for the purposes of general instruction in the National School' because of their strong political and religious nature.¹³⁶

The long term effects of such education on political attitudes is uncertain, although there have been numerous links suggested between the teaching of the Christian

¹³⁰ *CJ*, 13 March 1854.

¹³¹ Kelly, 'Ennis in the nineteenth century', p.154. Kennedy, 'Education in Inchicronan Parish, Co. Clare, 1800-1911', pp, 25, 29.

¹³² *Guys Directory*, 1893.

¹³³ Commissioners of National Education, School Reports, National Archives of Ireland, ED 2/5 p.21.

¹³⁴ Barry Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland: The Christian Brothers and the Development of Irish Nationalism 1838-1921* (Dublin, 1988) p. 113.

¹³⁵ Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland*, pp 118, 122.

¹³⁶ Commissioners of National Education, School Reports, National Archives of Ireland, ED 2/5 p.73

Brothers and their impact on the character of Irish nationalism.¹³⁷ Some members of the Christian Brothers in Clare were firm supporters of nationalism. The Christian Brothers in Ennis were supporters of the Irish parliamentary party, receiving William Redmond at a visit in 1897 where he congratulated them on their good work.¹³⁸ The Kilrush Christian brothers were equal to this in their support of nationalist campaigns, allowing their premises to be used for meetings of the Land League, United Irish League, and the Amnesty movement in the 1880s and 1890s.¹³⁹ But in this period, whether educational establishments supported the Land League or not, politics found its way into the schools. Support for boycotting was found amongst ninety pupils in Newmarket-on-Fergus, who, under the leadership of William Halpin, son of James Halpin, Land League organiser, left the school singing ‘the Boys of Wexford’ when it was attended by the son of an ‘emergency man’ (caretaker of an evicted farm) in the district.¹⁴⁰ Some teachers or schools in the county were supporters of the Land League, while those who did not show support were frequently the target of local Land League branches; in Querrin National School (four miles west of Kilkee) - the entire locality, under the guidance of Fr. O’Donohue, boycotted Mr. Lillis, a national school principal, who had recently acquired the management of turbary and provoked the hostility of the locals. The incident resulted in the entire withdrawal of children and resignation of assistants and mentors from the school.¹⁴¹ While some of the aggression directed against school teachers was agrarian in nature, there were also instances of school teachers being boycotted for political reasons. A school mistress in Broadford was boycotted for posing in a photograph with members of the constabulary who were responsible for giving evidence at the trial against a Land League priest, Father Kennedy of Meelin in county Cork.¹⁴² But females were also enthusiastic proponents of the nationalist campaign as teachers, and according to local lore, a teacher named Miss Frost was dismissed from Miltown Malbay for composing a scathing song concerning the activities of the divisional magistrate Clifford Lloyd, who was responsible for a number

¹³⁷ Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland*, passim; Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996) pp 13, 36.

¹³⁸ *Irish Daily Independent*, 13 November 1897.

¹³⁹ *LL*, 19 August 1896, 3 October 1900.

¹⁴⁰ *LL*, 30 January 1893; *Times*, 30 January 1893.

¹⁴¹ *CJ*, 11 Jan 1886.

¹⁴² *CJ*, 30 July 1888. Zeno, *Ireland in '89*, p. 56.

of arrests in the area between 1882 and 1883.¹⁴³ No matter what side of the political divide an individual took, it was impossible to disconnect the local school from the nationalist political upheaval that was permeating every level of society.

Whatever the type of political or religious ideal that was inoculated into these pupils, the education system had many benefits. While there was an initial time lag before the school system took off locally, most children appear to have joined such schools in increasing numbers in the 1850s and 1860s. This coincided with an increase in the number of school buildings in the county, which facilitated in making education available for all.¹⁴⁴ Throughout the late nineteenth century, the number of school buildings in the county had increased from 130 to 256 between the years 1853 and 1889.¹⁴⁵ Education was no longer the preserve of the few and was now enjoyed by lower class artisans and labourers. An existing Christian Brothers school roll (1858-1867) indicates the class of people who were increasingly educated in these schools, with the majority of those occupying the positions of (in order of numerical importance) farmers, artisans, labourers and trades, with a sprinkling of white collar workers and professionals.¹⁴⁶ This class of men, who would later form the rank-and-file of popular nationalist movements from the Land League to the Gaelic League, were now more than ever before acquiring an education.¹⁴⁷ The effects of such education were apparent in the declining literacy levels in the late nineteenth century. Between the decades 1841 and 1901, the majority of those illiterate in the county appear to have been no longer in the five to thirty-five years age range, but were concentrated among those over forty years.¹⁴⁸ This would suggest that those born in the 1860s were now more educated and less likely to be illiterate than those which had gone before them.

¹⁴³ Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 180, Shanavough, Miltown Malbay, Cill Muire, Mairtin O Criochain, p. 9. *CJ*, 12 January, 9, 16 February 1882; 8 February, 19, 30 April, 3, 7, 10, 14 May 1883.

¹⁴⁴ Kelly, 'Ennis in the nineteenth century', p. 153.

¹⁴⁵ *The sixty-sixth report of the Commission of National Education in Ireland, year 1889-1900*, H.C., 1900, XXIII, p. 42; *The nineteenth report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland (for the year 1852) with appendices Volume One*, H.C., 1852-1853, XLIII Pt. I, p. 158.

¹⁴⁶ http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/genealogy/ennistymon_cbs/index.htm, CBS Ennistymon School Registers, (accessed 10.6.2011). See also, Kennedy, 'Education in Inchicronan Parish, Co. Clare, 1800-1911', p. 34.

¹⁴⁷ See chapter seven for an analysis of the rank and file of the Gaelic League. See chapter on land for the rank and file of the Land campaign, also, Donald E. Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland: County Mayo from the Plantation to the Land War* (Cambridge, 1994) p. 195.

¹⁴⁸ Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Language, 1851-1911*, SN: 3573.

Legislation such as the Ballot Act of 1872 emancipated the tenant farmer from neo-feudal ties – now the farmer could vote without difficulty as he was no longer tied to the political opinions of his landlord. Such legislation facilitated the spread of a growing political interest and independence among the tenantry. In the decades before 1872, incidents abound of both clerical and landlord control of voters during election time. The 1859 county election, (contested between the Liberal, Francis Calcutt, and Colonel Luke White, and the Conservative Colonel Vandeleur) revealed incidents of election corruption and bribery. While the case could not connect them to any of the actual acts of corruption which took place, landlords in west Clare were active in the interests of the conservative side and were implicated in encouraging their tenants to vote for the candidate Colonel Vandeleur. A tenant of the Westby estate was approached in Kilrush by a bailiff, Thomas Sheehan, who was acting in the interest of landlord, Nicholas Westby. By offering him money, Sheehan encouraged the tenant to vote for Colonel Vandeleur, which he duly did. When asked in court if he was afraid of Thomas Sheehan the tenant replied, ‘I was not afraid; but Colonel Vandeleur is a friend of my landlord’s, and I could not oppose my landlord...I was not afraid....I could not oppose my landlord’.¹⁴⁹ It is difficult to gauge if the tenant was simply being defensive or genuine, when he repeatedly stated that he ‘was not afraid’ of voting against his landlord. However the statement does suggest the strong obligation on the part of the tenant farmer to side with his landlord on political matters.¹⁵⁰ The clergy was also engaged in the interest of the Liberal side and was just as influential as the landlords in encouraging voter’s political decisions. It was alleged that three priests Fr. Gleeson, Fr. Quaide and Fr. Burke (two of whom were implicated in similar acts of intimidation in Sixmilebridge some years previously) entertained freeholders to food, drink and provided them with money for car-hire on the day of polling, after voters had informed them that they would vote for Colonel White.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare Election with the Proceedings of the Committee (1860)*, H.C. 1860, XI. p. 14.

¹⁵⁰ See also, *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare County Election Petition; together with the proceedings of the Committee (1853)*, H.C. 1852-1853, IX, pp 75, 148-149; A tenant who was obliged to vote against his wishes in Sixmilebridge, did it because ‘I did not wish to have him against me...I would not wish to disoblige my master and agent’.

¹⁵¹ *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare Election with the Proceedings of the Committee (1860)*, H.C. 1860, XI, pp 49, 52.

With the Ballot Act of 1872 a significant change had taken place in the countryside with the two competing leaders in the community, landlord and priest, no longer influencing the character of rural political opinion.¹⁵² At least, this is how contemporaries saw it. At a meeting of influential farmers in Tulla to consider candidates for the 1874 election, one member stated: ‘we have the ballot now to protect us from landlord coercion and clergy influence and there is no reason why we should not vote for the candidate of our choice’.¹⁵³ This new-found political freedom was certainly exercised at the ensuing election, when it was noted that the ‘secrecy of voting under the ballot prevents any ebullition of fear’ and the failure of some candidates at the election, such as Crofton Vandeleur, was attributed to the introduction of the Ballot Act.¹⁵⁴ While the authenticity of this account is debatable, the report nonetheless suggests that tenants were no longer tied to the political opinions of their landlords at election time.

Even if the introduction of the Ballot Act was an important measure of constitutional reform, its success should not be over-estimated. Subsequent commissions and investigations into bribery and intimidation at election time show its effects to have been only partially successful. The 1892 election commission revealed that on both sides, i.e. the Parnellite and anti-Parnellite factions, the secrecy of the ballot was openly violated and intimidation widely practiced, with sticks, rifles, revolvers and other weapons utilised by the opposing parties before and after polling day. Crowds in the Parnellite interest prevented voters from attending the poll, one of whom was Patrick Mescall, who stated that he ‘was not alone but with scores that ran away from the booths’. On the Parnellite side, it was revealed by a voter that ‘a certain number of clergymen were in the booths’ intimidating voters.¹⁵⁵ Similar accusations were made at subsequent elections and one wonders if the Ballot Act’s successes have been overrated. At election booths in west Clare in 1895, various acts of intimidation, bribery and impersonation of voters, allegedly carried out by both the clergy and local groups, was ascribed to the success of the anti-Parnellite (or McCarthyite) faction, rev

¹⁵² Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants*, p. 14.

¹⁵³ Sheedy, *Clare Elections*, p. 246; *CJ*, 5 January 1874.

¹⁵⁴ Sheedy, *Clare Elections*, pp 248-249; *CJ*, 16 February 1874.

¹⁵⁵ *LL*, 5, 8, 15, 20 December 1892; See also *Controverted Elections (Judgements): Return of Shorthand Writers Notes of Judgements at Trial of Election Petitions, 1892-1893*, H.C. LXX, pp 15- 25.

presented by candidate Major Jameson, against Parnellite supporters of Rochford Maguire. One wonders if the political infighting which occurred in these areas, between rival factions of Parnellites and anti-Parnellites for control of the Ballot, had any influence on voters. The contest for control of voters opinions was closely contested in Knock, west Clare, where an unnamed and illiterate voter asked to vote for 'the Carthy'. Seizing the confusion, a Parnellite agent told him that it should 'not be a vote for Jameson', while a magistrate intervened and told the illiterate to vote for 'Jameson' and not 'Carthy'.¹⁵⁶

While legislation such as the Ballot Act might not have wrought the most significant of modern change in these period, other factors did. For the most part, the changes implemented in this period signalled the decline in the old customs and habits adopted in the countryside. Roads and transport brought a growing contact with the outside world, and while there was always some who could not afford it, tourism and travel brought rural inhabitants directly into contact with those outside their own areas. This contact was facilitated by the development of literacy and education and the decline of the Irish language, as rural inhabitants became more receptive to the type of ideas circulated outside the confines of Irish speaking centres, which were being particularly tapped into by an emerging nationalist newsprint and literature. With these and other changes, receptivity to political attitudes and new ideas accelerated, as politics no longer became the preserve of the townsman. Yet while modernisation and progress culminated in the increasing identification of the rural inhabitant with political ideas in the late 1870s, his receptivity to political ideas was undoubtedly further accelerated by economic distress.

The economic decline of the late 1870s, which witnessed poor prices for agricultural stock and a failure in the tillage sector, meant that now more than ever, politics impacted the rural inhabitant.¹⁵⁷ In rural areas, the rising economic distress served, as in contemporary France, to spur collective unity as many rural inhabitants 'realised that laws and national politics affected them'.¹⁵⁸ It was reported that a greater political

¹⁵⁶ *LL*, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26, 31 July, 11 October 1895.

¹⁵⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, pp 952-956; *Report of Her majesties Commissioners of Inquiry into the working of the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1870 and the Acts amending the same*, HC, 1881, XVIII, p. 704.

¹⁵⁸ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, p. 275; *CI*, 12 May 1877.

interest than ever before was shown among the rural constituents at election-time, with large attendances reported at polling booths in 1879 from two extremes of Clare, from Ballyvaughan in the north to Carrigaholt in south-west.¹⁵⁹ As Cronin has shown in the Cork context, this increasing economic distress proved a catalyst for the spread of nationalist politics well into the latter half of the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁰ Towns, where country people traditionally went to decide on a candidate prior to election, were now no longer the only centres of political opinion and discussion.¹⁶¹ At the 1879 election, agents bustled throughout the countryside while at polling booths, ‘groups of persons, not only belonging to the town, but from distant parts of the county, were from an early hour in the morning, congregated in the streets, and all the exits and entrances of the lanes and byways’.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ *CI*, 18 August 1877.

¹⁶⁰ Cronin, *Country, Class or Craft?*, p. 134.

¹⁶¹ It was ‘the general custom for country people to be asking for whom they would vote’ in the town of Ennis, *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare County Election Petition; together with the proceedings of the Committee (1853)*, H.C. 1852-1853, IX, p. 98.

¹⁶² *CI*, 24 May 1879.

Chapter Two: Land, economy and politicisation.

Throughout periods of economic distress which recurred throughout the 1880s and 1890s, political ideas became radicalised, and large sections of the population were mobilised and various forms of collective action were undertaken.¹ Such mobilisation succeeded in enforcing recognition of the tenant's claim to land tenure.² Through the period of the Land League (1879-1882) and its successor, the National League, crowds adopted different forms of behaviour to negotiate different demands, which were an essential part in wringing demands and concessions from the government. Such protest collectively drew much from the past, but also the methods of crowd protest in this period show that it was a progressive and modern movement. Although these crowds were local in composition, they showed consciousness of wider national issues, and they used modern methods of protest, mixing recreation with the expression of complaints, and using newspapers to publicise and draw attention to grievances. In comparison to those which had assembled in the immediate post-famine period, these later nineteenth century crowds were organised and constitutional and through their identification of land grievances with state shortcomings, were part of a national programme with a national objective.

Perhaps the most significant action undertaken by the tenantry in Clare throughout the land agitation was the way in which they succeeded in resisting the enforcement of legal processes like eviction, and in preventing the seizure and sale of stock. The most common form of crowd protest was through mass resistance to evictions. This was calculated to frustrate landlords and authorities and to reinforce the growing perception that the tenant had a right to the soil. They also had an immediate purpose: not only did they emphasise the tenant's right to his holding, but could be successful in negotiating an agreement between landlord and tenant. One of the earliest examples of tenant resistance was in Mullagh, west Clare, in 1879 and it succeeded in reinstating a tenant in his holding. The landlord, Michael Studdert, who had recently raised rents on the

¹ Stephen Ball, 'Crowd activity during the Irish Land War, 1879-90', in Peter Jupp and Eoin Magennis (eds.), *Crowds in Ireland, c. 1720-1920* (Basingstoke, 2000) p. 212

² Ball, 'Crowd activity during the Irish Land War', p. 213.

estate, was met with ‘an immense mob’ while carrying out the eviction of a tenant named Mungovan. The crowd, armed with sticks and banners, had erected a platform close to the targeted holding and prior to the landlord’s arrival had stripped the house of every bit of furniture. ‘After considerable parley with several of the orators, who seemed to abound there’, Studdert succeeded in coming to an agreement with the tenant.³ These events showed the success of crowds who became involved in well thought-out campaigns and were adept at collective bargaining. Resistance to writs and the seizure and sale of stock were common occurrences during the Land and National League agitations and something which the constabulary and bailiffs found very difficult to combat. During cattle seizures, cattle were often removed to different holdings, or driven off to unknown locations. Local leaders were pivotal in harnessing this support and often mobilised crowds in pursuit of these objectives. When Fr. Laurence Browne’s cattle were due to be seized for rent due at Crusheen in North Clare, a gang of young men were given orders to drive the cattle off his lands.⁴ In many instances what these events revealed was the weaknesses of local law enforcement. During the sale in 1887 of stock belonging to the IRB suspect, Bryan Clune, sympathisers carried away his sheep under their arms when his stock was put up for sale for arrears of rent due.⁵

Such forms of tenant resistance were not, of course, altogether new. In fact, much of the resistance which occurred in this period drew on protest methods associated with the pre-famine period. The ‘moonlighting’ or nocturnal raiding of the 1880s borrowed heavily from the Whiteboy campaigns waged throughout the countryside in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This type of collective mobilisation was evident in 1881 during the imprisonment of a large number of individuals for participation in the ‘no rent campaign’. Large crowds gathered outside the homes of suspects imprisoned in Kilmainham or elsewhere, lending moral and practical support by digging potatoes and gathering hay ready for harvesting, a type of collective activity apparent from as early as 1813 when large crowds gathered at nightly meetings in

³ *Report of Her majesties Commissioners of Inquiry into the working of the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1870 and the Acts amending the same*, HC, 1881, XVIII p. 1455.

⁴ *CJ*, 2 July 1891.

⁵ *CI*, 5 November 1881; *MN*, 17 August 1887.

Cratloe for the purpose of turning up ground in protest against lack of conacre.⁶ But the land agitation also adopted modern forms of tenant resistance such as ‘boycotting’. Whole communities worked together to make life miserable for boycotted individuals and revealed the punitive capacity of close knit rural communities. In Kilkishen, in 1897, the entire congregation left the church which a local ‘grass grabber’ attended, effectively cutting him off from every aspect of community life.⁷ Some years later, despite the remonstrations of the clergy, the local congregation of Doora boycotted mass for several weeks when the local ‘grabber’ attended service.⁸ But while the working of the boycott depended on the close knit and localised nature of these rural communities, its ultimate success lay in its mobilisation of large sections of the population in pursuit of national demands. The boycott did not solely operate within the close ties of the local community, but radiated outwards, mobilising support over a large area in pursuit of national demands. For this reason, while it might have used primitive methods of rural action, it was quite advanced and extensive. When a local man was boycotted in Tulla, Co. Clare for taking grass lands, the campaign was such that he had to leave his holding to go to Tipperary. However, his actions were broadcast to such an extent that similar pressures were put to bear on him in Tipperary and he consequently found it impossible to settle in his new holding.⁹ While the agitation was small scale, it mobilised others outside the environs of the local community to become part of a wider campaign for change.

Unlike previous forms of crowd gathering, the mass agitation of the Land League and National League was not a ‘rebellion of the belly’, but a well organised campaign with a clear objective of securing land reform.¹⁰ This modern resistance was adept in utilising publicity and media attention. Photographs and posters were utilised to generate sympathy and publicity for tenants involved in conflict with their landlords. The publicity campaign waged in Bodyke, where the first battering ram was used in 1887, created a media frenzy and was very successful in advertising the tenant’s plight and wringing concessions from the government. According to the authorities, the events

⁶ *CI*, 5 November 1881; State of the Country Papers, NAI, 1813, 1534-4.

⁷ *CJ*, 27 October, 1 November 1897.

⁸ CO904/75, Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, July 1902.

⁹ CSORP 1882. 32122.

¹⁰ D. Thompson (ed.), *The Essential E.P Thompson* (New York) p. 317

there left the ‘whole of Clare...more or less in a state of excitement’.¹¹ The use of media and newspaper publicity brought a new aspect to the movement and secured the support of an ever widening nationalist audience.¹²

The reaction of crowds to the campaign for land reform was not simply a response to concrete and immediate local grievances, but also served as resistance to the authority of the government and to the rule of the law. This conflict with the law often became apparent at evictions; in Bodyke, stones and other objects were thrown at the constabulary: vitriol, hot water, buckets of hot lime, and even a beehive were used as weapons with which to resist the RIC.¹³ In Kilrush local song commemorated the Vandeleur tenants’ resistance to the RIC who drove ‘Balfour’s Bobbies’ ‘into the shore’.¹⁴ Such commentary reflected not only an immediate concern, i.e. land, but also a strong identification between agrarian protest and resistance to the state. In this context, the RIC were not simply portrayed as local representatives of the law, but as the immediate representatives of a government. At some of these demonstrations, resistance to the authorities was interpreted within a wider protest as resistance to the political system. It was stated in court that much of the violent conflict which had erupted at a National League meeting in Ennis in 1888 between the police, military and local crowds, was in part aggravated by the military’s action in marching through the town during mass earlier that morning, singing ‘God Save the Queen’.¹⁵

In many instances, these demonstrations were deliberately designed to frustrate both the authorities and the state. Following government proclamation of a National League meeting that was announced for Ballycoree, in Ennis in 1887, the constabulary had occupied the hillside for some time while the meeting was actually taking place without their knowledge in the main streets of the town.¹⁶ A song (composed by a local newspaper editor) exemplifies how these events afforded an ideal opportunity for poking fun at the existing law:

¹¹ CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, 6 June 1887.

¹² Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 180, Bainseach (Cill Chaoi), Dun Beg, Donncha MacCaithaigh, p. 329.

¹³ *CI*, 4 June 1881; CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, 6 July 1887.

¹⁴ Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 180, Moyasta, Kilkee, P. D. Priodargas, p. 174.

¹⁵ *CJ*, 16 April 1888.

¹⁶ T. S. Clery, *Songs of the Irish Land War*, p. 51.

They rode, they ran, they roared, and seemed the more to froth and fret,
To think the day they were so fooled had come about so wet,
An' whin they got beyant the cross – O Moses! What a crowd,
They met wid Dillon an' O Brien, cheerin long an' loud,
The meetin' all was over, that's why Balfour gets so quare,
Whin any gorsoon hints about that day in county Clare.¹⁷

Similar hoax announcements of land meetings staged in far off places sent the police and military on 'a wild goose chase' and succeeded in publicly undermining the efficiency and authority of the law.¹⁸

While animosity between locals and the law enforcers was heightened at these times, it was apparent that most of the resistance engaged in by the tenantry involved constitutional action and occurred within a non-violent framework. All interests were prepared to gather together in pursuit of a common objective during the land agitation. When a sub-sheriff (whose duties involved carrying out evictions) was himself evicted from his holding in Dysart, Corofin, in 1899, large crowds gathered outside the house to prevent an agent from taking possession of his holding. The crowd attempted to discourage the agent's actions, engaging in a 'hostile demonstration towards him' and as a deterrent, 'several shots were fired in the vicinity of the place'.¹⁹ The common grievance regarding land had the capacity to unite large numbers of people of whatever opinion in pursuit of a common objective. It was progressive in its effect – uniting all shades of opinion. Both Catholic and Protestant were members of the Land League and National League in Kilrush, and it was not unusual to have the two denominations uniting in favour of land issues on the political platform (one of the most popular local Protestants in this regard was Thomas Coote, proprietor, land campaigner and frequent organiser of the Manchester Martyr and '98 Commemorations). Other members of the Protestant denomination in the town also became involved in moonlighting outrages which were carried out against individuals who shared the same religious affiliation.²⁰

In some instances collective agitation involved moonlighting, i.e. night-time attacks on the persons or property of those considered obnoxious by the local community. This

¹⁷ *MN*, 7 September 1887; *New York Times*, 5 September 1887.

¹⁸ *CJ*, 30 January 1882.

¹⁹ *LL*, 3 October 1898.

²⁰ *MN*, 1 September 1886; *CJ*, 4 June 1888.

violence, whether in the form of agrarian outrage or threats, offered a further measure of political mobilisation.²¹ The men generally tended to work in small gangs, and included up to thirty individuals in some places.²² While it is debatable whether groups of young individuals who participated in moonlight crimes can be defined as ‘crowds’ there was essentially a strong backing from the rural community for the objectives of moonlighters during the land agitation. A number of outrages which occurred in Tulla (against those who had taken evicted farms and against the unpopular landlord A.J Creagh) in the early 1880s were, according to the constabulary, ‘rather approved of in the neighbourhood’ and no-one came forward to give evidence.²³ Such was the sympathy manifested towards the attacks that the offences were regarded as the result of a ‘general conspiracy in the district’ and the majority or near majority of the people were considered to be ‘either engaged in the sympathy, or form sympathy with, the conspirators’.²⁴ Informants often refused to prosecute these agitators in court, probably through fear of reprisal, but also out of a genuine sympathy with their aims.²⁵ An incident which attracted the attention of most of the ‘poor farmers of the county’ occurred in 1891 when the target of an intended moonlight attack, James Donnellan, refused to prosecute his assailants. His father, who came forward to provide the evidence, was contradicted by his son ‘point blank in every detail’. The young Donnellan was an ‘old school friend’ of the moonlighters and also worked in their employment, factors which might have influenced his unwillingness to convict them. But the explanation was even more complicated, and it was later revealed by James, that he had himself been previously involved in moonlight outrages with the same gang.²⁶ In fact such was the commonality of feeling manifested towards moonlighters that one of their victims, who was found shot in his home, told the constabulary he ‘did not think they meant to do him harm, but that they were carrying out the principle of the Land League’.²⁷

²¹ Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin, 1981), p. 73.

²² *CI*, 10 September 1881.

²³ CSORP. 1882. 32122.

²⁴ CSORP. 1882. 32122.

²⁵ *CJ*, 17 May 1883.

²⁶ *CJ*, 9 March 1891.

²⁷ *CI*, 24 June 1880.

But who were these moonlighting gangs? As Jordan has shown in the Mayo context, the majority of members of these ephemeral groups tended to be young men – and most were also members of the IRB.²⁸ In Tulla and Scariff, eighteen identified moonlighters were also IRB men and were mostly in their early twenties and were the sons of small farmers.²⁹ In Miltown Malbay, men arrested for moonlighting and IRB related activity were also primarily of this age group. An observer stated that members of the Fenian movement who were involved in moonlighting outrages in the area were generally ‘young fellows, sons of farmers’.³⁰ Police who identified known moonlighters in 1881 listed most them as farmer’s sons and labourers (it is worth noting that in Clare the term ‘labourer’ was often applied to a farmer’s son who had not yet inherited).³¹ This was also the impression of Captain O’Shea, who during the ‘No rent’ campaign ascribed much of the agrarian violence to ‘the desperation of the small tenants in arrears – whose sons are some of captain moonlights recruits [which] is the foundation upon which the inciters to outrage have worked.’³²

For those farmers’ sons who participated in the campaign during the land agitation, moonlighting mobilised local communal gangs under the banner of common grievances as part of the economic struggle for peasant proprietorship. In this campaign landlords were the main object of attack.³³ Since it was difficult for moonlighters to target landlords, those tenants who were believed to have facilitated them were more often targeted. In north and north-west Clare where grazing was predominant, the large grazier replaced the landlord as the scapegoat, with moonlighters in these regions targeting both graziers and herds in their employment. These agitators attempted to prevent any system of grazing being introduced into the district which raised the price of land.³⁴ It was widely acknowledged that competition for grazing land drove up the price of holdings, something which had the effect of economically isolating the farmer (preventing him from obtaining any fair price for land) and thus hindering land

²⁸ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland*, pp 324-328.

²⁹ C.S.O.R.P 1882. 19433; CSORP, 1882. 20193.

³⁰ *CJ*, 20 May 1888.

³¹ *First report from the select committee of the House of Lords on Land Law Ireland together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence and appendix* (1882), HC, 1882, XI, p. 272

³² Captain O’Shea Papers, MS 5752; Letter to Parnell, 22 April 1882

³³ CBS, Confidential “B” files, 1880-1883 (2 cartons), Shelf number, number 67, 3/716; CBS 126/S

³⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, p. 438

purchase.³⁵ The campaign therefore directed against graziers had the result that ‘miles and miles’ of grazing land was left derelict in the area due to boycotting, intimidation and outrage.³⁶ Generally, moonlighting became an activity through which the local community could voice its grievances against graziers, landlords and their associates who were believed to prove an obstacle in the tenant drive for peasant proprietorship.

The description of large numbers of the ‘peasantry’ being mobilised through moonlighting was not altogether new. Both graziers and landlords had often been the butt of attack by combinations such as the Whiteboys and Ribbonmen in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Agrarian agitation from the late eighteenth century onwards in some ways prefigured the primitive nature of the moonlighting agitation of the late nineteenth century. This moonlighting evoked the pagan ritual associated with May Day festivals and those costumes worn by the Straw Boys or Wren Boys, while it adopted other forms of ritual such as passwords and handshakes.³⁷ This is something which has been associated with archaic forms of social protest in the European context. According to Hobsbawm, ‘all human organisations have their ceremonial or ritual sides, but modern social movements are surprisingly lacking in deliberately contrived ritual’.³⁸ These ‘moonlighting’ organisations also tended to operate similar to the early Whiteboy tradition, and both had extensive networks established both within and outside the county, mobilised the sympathies of the local population and were under the control of experienced (or at least well known) leaders.

Clare moonlighters in the late nineteenth century often adopted the same symbols as the old movements; they dug graves outside the homes of their victims, erected crosses at conspicuous sites outside people’s houses and engraved markings on people’s property that suggested to all that they were in peril.³⁹ Moonlighters also sent threatening letters, which depicted pictures of the pike, cross and gun.⁴⁰ To keep the movement clandestine they dressed in costume, blackened their faces and wore masks. In some instance these men showed a penchant for flamboyancy and were found wearing women’s clothes and

³⁵ Campbell, *Land and revolution*, pp 93, 99.

³⁶ *Report of the Royal Commission on the Land Law Ireland Act 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act 1885* (London, 1887) pp 438, 30

³⁷ James S. Donnelly, *Captain Rock: The Irish Agrarian Rebellion of 1821-1824* (Cork, 2009) p. 111.

³⁸ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (New York, 1959) p. 150.

³⁹ CO903/4, p. 31.

⁴⁰ *CJ*, 2 January, 9 March 1882

carrying parasols.⁴¹ It was apparent that the costume was not only for disguise, but was also part of the occasion these events were for the young boys who participated in them. Prior to the committal of a moonlight outrage in Tulla, a tailor was employed by the moonlighters to supply them with the necessary disguises.⁴² Moonlighting also adopted the use of passwords, hand signals and oaths to maintain secrecy and elude recognition. An IRB/moonlighting gang in Crusheen in 1879 used passwords and signs, suggesting that the agrarian agitation in this district drew from the Ribbon tradition, which was notably strong in this part of the county.⁴³ According to one witness,

There were passwords amongst them. The sign was to rub the finger of the right hand to the right eye, and the password, 'Glory'. I don't know what the answer was to be. I never used it. Afterwards I swore in two or three. If the man addressed recognised the sign and password he returned his recognition by a nod.⁴⁴

To maintain secrecy, but also to enforce obedience, oaths were used by moonlighters. According to one man who was involved in a moonlighting organisation in Tulla, he was told by the leader there to swear to be true to the principles of the '[Land] League, and to commit outrages on anyone who would take boycotted farms or grass, and to commit outrages even if it was against their own fathers'.⁴⁵ Moonlighters, in turn, generally administered oaths to their victims, who were often required to go upon their knees and pledge to obey their edicts.⁴⁶ Members of such gangs often had the support of their equivalents in other districts and to further their ends connections and networks were established between gangs in a locality. Occasionally 'where it may be necessary to employ a stranger to commit an outrage, the members of one gang will assist another group'.⁴⁷ In an incident involving a moonlight raid in Lisdoonvarna, 'some of the

⁴¹ *CJ*, 22 June 1882; *Independent* (Dublin), 3 March 1894.

⁴² *CJ*, 9 March 1891.

⁴³ Jennifer Kelly, *The downfall of Hagan Sligo Ribbonism in 1842* (Dublin, 2008) p. 12. State of the Country Papers, NAI, 2183-11, 2183/2. Michael MacMahon, 'Ribbonism in Clare, 1815-1831' (Unpublished MA, University of Limerick, 2002) pp 36-38. It was reported that the movement first pushed into the county Clare from the southern parts of Galway in 1820 – and as a result the Ribbon upheaval was notably strong and mostly confined to the northern parts of the county. It was later believed to have resurfaced in this region and in the east of the county in the 1850s. *CJ*, 15, 25, August, 22 December 1853.

⁴⁴ *CJ*, 16 April 1883.

⁴⁵ *CJ*, 22, 29 January, 9 March, 23 April 1891.

⁴⁶ *CJ*, 22 June 1882.

⁴⁷ CBS 6186/S Annual report of crime special branch for the year 1892, Western Division

Barefield boys' from near Ennis were employed in carrying out the raid.⁴⁸ This connection between the gang in Lisdoonvarna with that of Barefield, twenty miles away, suggest that there was communication between gangs in different localities. In Crusheen, moonlight raids employed moonlighters from Tulla, another twenty miles away, while members in Crusheen were associated with outrages committed in Oranmore, Galway, a distance of twenty-five miles to the north.⁴⁹ Men brought to trial for involvement in a moonlighting attack, on a tenant who had taken an evicted farm in Knockaprehaghaun near Clooney, resided sixteen miles away. According to the constabulary in Tulla, 'there is no doubt they were brought by parties in his neighbourhood to commit the offence'.⁵⁰ Such gangs eluded infiltration by the authorities in that the perpetrators committed the crime in far away districts, making it impossible for the people in that locality to identify them to the police or magistrates.

This scenario of the travelling moonlighter was not altogether new and even in the closing decades of the 1880s there were examples of travelling 'bandit' type figures common to that of the previous century. A moonlighter from Mallow, in north Cork, posing as 'Rory of the Hills' of Tipperary, was arrested in county Clare in 1870 along with an accomplice on a charge of sending threatening letters to landlords, threatening to shoot a magistrate, stealing weapons and carrying arms in a proclaimed district.⁵¹ This moonlighter travelled throughout the west of the county staying *en route* in Miltown Malbay, Kilmaley, Kilmihil, Cooraclare, Ennis, and Kilrush.⁵² These links were exemplified in the case of the moonlighter 'John Ryan' who travelled throughout North Clare in 1876, posing as a fugitive from a recent moonlighting attack on the Mitchelstown agent, Patten Bridge.⁵³ His connection with the case appears to have

⁴⁸ *MN*, 8 October 1887.

⁴⁹ *CJ*, 1 February, 3 May 1883.

⁵⁰ CSORP. 1882.32122.

⁵¹ *CJ*, 21 February, 13 March, 17 July 1876.

⁵² *CJ*, 21 February, 13 March, 17 July 1876.

⁵³ *CJ*, 6 April 1876. John Ryan, was, along with his uncle John Crowe, involved in the shooting of Patten Bridge in Mitchelstown in 1876. Bridge, successor to John Sadlier, was a notorious land agent to Nathaniel Buckley, an absentee English gentleman who owned vast tracts of land in Limerick, Tipperary, and Cork. Once increased rents were demanded from the distressed tenants in Mitchelstown by Patten Bridge in 1875, an 'organised conspiracy' was set up among the tenants. Two attempts were made on the life of Bridges while collecting rents on the estate: in 1875 he was shot at by John Ryan and in 1876 he was again attacked by Ryan and his uncle, John Crowe, resulting in the death of his cab driver, Hyland. Ryan went on the run after the incident, and was later arrested in Waterford with a large quantity of money in his possession while he attempted to pose as a native of Meelick, in Co. Clare. John Crowe

galvanised the rural inhabitants, who, on the moonlighter's return to the district ten years later, become involved in a moonlight raid on a 'grabber' named Sexton in Lisdoonvarna.⁵⁴ But the sympathy and links which these moonlighters gained from the local community were often utilised, in this case, by the law. Police, who were present at the raid, engaged in a violent scuffle with the moonlighters, with one of them, Constable Whelan, dying at the scene.⁵⁵ The local police's promptness in putting down the raid was facilitated by Ryan who, it was later revealed, was actually an *agent provocateur* named Cullinan, in the employment of the constabulary.⁵⁶ During the ten years in which he had been known in North Clare, Cullinan had revealed to the police the considerable network of moonlighting gangs in the county, and had become acquainted with leading moonlighters and IRB men in Corofin, Kilmaley, Ennis, Tulla, Lisdoonvarna and Ennistymon.⁵⁷ It appears that the traditional figure of the travelling bandit had now become increasingly utilised by a more effective and extensive police network. But some remnants of the old tradition remained in west Clare, where another moonlighter, unconnected with the movements of Cullinan, had been moving through the county a few months previously, believed to be from Wexford and posing under the alias Keeffe. He had been 'tramping about the counties of Limerick and Clare for some time' until he was arrested in Newcastle West, Limerick. He was initially reputed to have been the much sought after and mythical 'Captain' of the moonlighters who roved about the counties of Cork, Limerick, Clare and Kerry.⁵⁸ This moonlighter was believed to have been 'running about the western part of Clare' and was involved in a number of arms raids in Kilrush where his arrival coincided suspiciously with the attendance of agent H. Studdert in the town who was collecting rents on behalf of the landlord Vandeleur.⁵⁹ It is probable however, that neither an assassination attempt nor any violent attack was planned, and the main feature of his stay appears to have been the whipping up popular enthusiasm for the land agitation.

however, was convicted and hung in county Cork. The case generated widespread sympathy for the assassins, and through some trick of fate, John Ryan escaped and remained a fugitive for many years. *CJ*, 6, 13, 17 April, 27 July, 28 August 1876, 3 December 1877.

⁵⁴ *CJ*, 6 October 1887.

⁵⁵ *CJ*, 19 January 1888.

⁵⁶ *CJ*, 12 December 1887.

⁵⁷ *MN*, 5 October 1887; *CJ*, 29 September, 10 October 1887, *Limerick Chronicle*, 27 September, 6 October 1887.

⁵⁸ *MN*, 12 October 1886.

⁵⁹ *MN*, 8 September 1886.

Through their actions, moonlighters succeeded in gaining the sympathy of the rural dwellers during their travels. ‘Keeffe’ for instance, was, like other moonlighters, served with refreshments and provisions on his travels and he entertained those who harboured him by telling them that, ‘there is to be a war in Ireland’.⁶⁰ The moonlighter posing as ‘Rory of the Hills’ similarly received food and shelter from sympathetic farmers throughout the west of the county where he was eventually found sleeping in a house belonging to a farmer named Kelly in Cooraclare.⁶¹ The tenant farmer’s willingness to harbour and support such potential trouble-makers revealed the strong animosity in rural areas towards the law. The response of the locals to the activities of the supposed moonlighter ‘Ryan’ (in reality the *agent provocateur*, Cullinane) and his connection with the murder of an unpopular land agent in Cork, brings to mind the character of Christy Mahon in the *Playboy of the Western World*. While in Lisdoonvarna, ‘Ryan’ was initially received with much hostility, until, he confirmed to inquisitive and suspicious locals that he ‘was wanted for Bridges’ case’.⁶² The locals’ reaction reveals much about rural attitudes towards the law, and on hearing of Cullinane’s connection with the murder their attitude changed from one of hostility to admiration and he ‘was received with open arms’.⁶³ Because of his association with such acts, Cullinane’s popularity spread throughout North Clare, which meant that work, hospitality and fine treatment was now much easier to obtain from local farmers. During his visit to the county in 1877 and again in 1887, he was received and entertained in many places and while there was provided with work in the summer months where he regaled the locals with tales of his supposed involvement in moonlight activity while in Kerry.⁶⁴

This type of moonlighting operated in communities which shared a traditional animosity towards the law. Local gangs were built on links within that community, participated in by brothers, close relatives, work associates or old school friends. The presence of labourers and farmers’ sons in the movement is significant – as both would have worked together on the farm and daily activities would have brought them into

⁶⁰ *MN*, 16 October 1886.

⁶¹ *CJ*, 21 February, 13 March, 17 July 1876.

⁶² *MN*, 5 October 1887; *CJ*, 29 September, 10 October 1887, *Limerick Chronicle*, 27 September, 6 October 1887.

⁶³ *CJ*, 19 January 1888.

⁶⁴ *MN*, 29 September, 5 October 1887.

contact with one another.⁶⁵ The planning of attacks was also closely bound into community sociability and business: most of this outrage was plotted at social functions, dances, meetings in towns, and at market and fair days. ‘Councils’ were often staged by gangs of moonlighters prior to an outrage (there are numerous examples of these meetings held in private houses, barns, graveyards, mountain passes, quarries, ruined castles and cross roads) where the proceedings were planned and leaders were appointed to carry out the outrages.⁶⁶ Moonlighters often met on market days and in public houses (as mentioned) in preparation for the attack.⁶⁷ It could be argued that moonlighting was not so much a function of political opposition as a manifestation of custom and alcohol.⁶⁸ Alcohol was often used at these meetings to enforce community of feeling through sociability. A Herd’s League which existed in Oughterard, west Galway shared similar aims to branches in Ballyvaughan and Ennis in 1892, and was established to protect the interests of herdsmen in the district. This mutuality of interest was enforced within the confines of the public house and one of the principal features of the Oughterard branch was an impressive consumption of large quantities of whiskey.⁶⁹

As with such organisations in the past, a suitable choice of leader was essential to moonlighting. According to the constabulary, ‘these men form a moonlighting gang, in a particular locality, generally under the leadership of some experienced man’.⁷⁰ Many of these leaders tended to be members of the IRB, whose organising experience meant that they were able to maintain a tight and covert moonlighting gang. This was apparent in Doora, near Ennis, where two IRB suspects and farmer’s sons were known to be leaders of the most ‘reckless moonlighting gangs in the country’.⁷¹ These men were responsible for leading a gang of moonlighters who fired at landlord Bindon Blood of Cranagher and his police escort at Castletown (townlands located between Tulla and

⁶⁵ *First report from the select committee of the House of Lords on Land Law Ireland together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence and appendix* (1882), HC, 1882, XI, p.272

⁶⁶ *CJ*, 16 April, 8 May 1883; *MN*, 5 October 1887.

⁶⁷ CBS, 1903, 28288/S; *CJ*, 18 February 1889

⁶⁸ Conley, *Melancholy Accidents*, p. 7.

⁶⁹ CO904/16, Reel 7, Register of Home Associations, Herds League; http://www.aughty.org/pdf/herdsmen_loughrea.pdf; John Cunningham, ‘A Spirit of Self-Preservation: Herdsmen around Loughrea in the late nineteenth century’.(accessed 14 June 2011).

⁷⁰ CBS, 1892, 6186/S.

⁷¹ CBS, 1890, 1244/S.

Ennis) in August 1889 and again at his house in March 1890.⁷² Others such as John Moloney, of Killanena, Bodyke, secretary of the IRB, were involved in agrarian outrages, providing the momentum for the violent resistance and outrages carried out on the Bodyke estate.⁷³ IRB men such as James Whelan of Ballynahinch steward on the Bodyke estate in east Clare, were prominent moonlighters and had ‘plotted most of the crimes committed’ in the area, and were considered the mouthpiece of the ‘disaffected’.⁷⁴ In other instances moonlighting gangs were under the control of men who had previous military experience. Gangs such as those that led an attack on landlord Weldon C. Molony in 1893 at Tulla contained former military men such as Patrick Clune, who was at the time recently discharged after serving six years in the army.⁷⁵ Michael Callaghan, also of Bodyke, was ‘a corporal in the army, bought out by local subscription in order that he might drill the peasantry’.⁷⁶ These moonlighters added a military touch to their activities, and moonlighters arrested in East Clare were known to carry out night drills and dress in military attire.⁷⁷

However, while custom, tradition and the desire for social recreation and alcohol which was permitted by such gangs undoubtedly influenced their popularity they were also highly political in nature. By the late nineteenth century these gangs had become quite modern, organised and complex.⁷⁸ Galvanised by the IRB, moonlighting gangs in Clare were described as ‘very closely organised and most dangerous’ in comparison to Kerry moonlighting which was reputedly carried out by ‘small local bands of farmers’. In the opinion of one observer, Clare moonlighting:

Is a completely organised and ruthless secret society and when with a discredited law and feeble police, and a history of ill used... and murdered informers you have and face a completely organised society of that sort the question is a difficult one. It is the more difficult when the society has strong friends at court....⁷⁹

⁷² *Times*, 10 May 1893; CO903/3, pp 8-11; CBS, 1890, 1244/S

⁷³ *CJ*, 2 March 1893, CBS 6186/S, ‘Annual report of crime special branch for the year 1892: Western Division’, CBS 131/S, ‘Stealing cattle from Captain Croker’s evicted farm’

⁷⁴ Colonial Office Papers, CO904/18, Reel 8, ‘Register of Suspects I-J’, James Whelan, Ballynahinch.

⁷⁵ CBS, 1893, 7617/S.

⁷⁶ CBS, Confidential ‘B’ files, 1880-1883, Shelf number 3/716, number 67.

⁷⁷ *CJ*, 6 March 1882.

⁷⁸ CBS, Confidential ‘B’ files, 1880-1883, Shelf number 3/716, number 67; *Limerick Chronicle*, 8 October 1887; *Belfast Newsletter*, 1 September 1894.

⁷⁹ Gloucester Archives, [D2455/PCC/45](#), Letters from Sir Redvers Buller to Michael Hicks Beach, Letters dated (September 1886, Moore’s Hotel Kilkee; 16 September 1886, Railway Hotel Killarney.)

Mobilised by the IRB, the Clare movement was not merely localised but was conscious of a broader national programme during the land agitation, i.e. the push for land ownership. Many of the young men, who joined these organisations, were politically active members of the Land League and later National League in their respective localities. Their involvement in these organisations was due to their position as farmers' sons. For those whose only other option was emigration, small farmers' sons were prepared to join such moonlighting organisations because it concerned itself with a programme that affected their futures directly – land tenure and peasant proprietorship.

The agitation that was mobilised by the tenantry through both constitutional and more violent means had secured many benefits from state legislation since 1880. The passage of the 1881 land act, it was argued, gave two-thirds of the tenantry security in their holdings.⁸⁰ They consolidated the advantage accompanying the 1881 Land Act in a number of ways. When their holdings were being evaluated by the Land Commissioners tenants allegedly adopted underhand tactics to secure great reductions. To obtain a smaller rent tenants often drove cattle off their land and deliberately flooded or destroyed their holdings. Others received compensation for making improvements on their holdings, which the commissioners later admitted they had not inspected or in other instances, found impossible to determine. The dice was also stacked against the landlord: valuers who assessed tenants' land were at times known to be biased in their favour. In the absence of a landlord or his representative and with no maps as guidance, valuers were entirely dependent on the tenant's description of his holdings. Neither were valuers eager to dispute such estimates, considering that most districts had a high frequency of agrarian outrage and intimidation at this time.⁸¹ It was therefore no surprise that following the passage of the Land Act, significant concessions were obtained by the Clare tenantry, with the rent being reduced by an average of twenty to twenty-five per cent.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, p. 458.

⁸¹ *Fourth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Land Law Ireland together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence and appendix*, HC, 1883, XIII, pp 9-22

⁸² *Second Report From the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Land Law Ireland together with the proceedings of the committee Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*, H.C., 1882, XI, p. 3.

Greater concessions following 1881 witnessed a renewed period of rising expectations. Tenants, who once argued that they would be content with such an act, it was argued by observers, now looked upon the act as an 'instalment' rather than a final settlement of the land question.⁸³ Following tenant complaints of excessive rents during the downturn in 1884, the Ashbourne Land Act attempted to address these issues by offering reduced clauses for tenants to purchase their holdings. The act advanced the whole of the purchase money to tenants to be repaid at a much longer period over forty-nine years and at a reduced rate of four per cent interest.⁸⁴ In response, eight estates in the county made applications for loans during the year 1886 in Clare, though it was argued that the valuation of the land [used to determine the purchase price] was too high and that 'until that is reduced people won't avail of it'.⁸⁵ In Clare, many tenants were not disposed to buy, but were looking instead for a reduction in their rentals and seventeen estates demanded twenty to thirty per cent abatements.⁸⁶ Overall, under this new act, a total of 192 loans were granted and 8,312 acres of holdings purchased.⁸⁷ It was apparent that the land agitation had facilitated the emergence of an organised politically canny farming class, who were increasingly in tune with the activities of the government in relation to land issues. Rather than purchase immediately it was observed that farmers were prepared to wait and see if more concessions were beyond the horizon: for many farmers their 'minds are unfixd at the present time. They are expecting something may happen. They are expecting something better will happen'.⁸⁸

Favourable conditions for purchase became available in the following decade with the passage of the 1896 land act which was more appealing to tenant farmers, with 1,491 loans advanced and 65,589 acres advanced to farmers over the next ten years.⁸⁹ Many

⁸³ *First report from the select committee of the House of Lords on Land Law Ireland together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence and appendix* (1882), HC, 1882, XI, p. 276.

⁸⁴ Frank Thompson, *The end of Liberal Ulster: land agitation and land reform, 1868-1886* (Belfast, 2001) p. 292.

⁸⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, pp 469,59.

⁸⁶ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, pp 469, 739-740.

⁸⁷ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Second Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 297.

⁸⁸ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, p. 469

⁸⁹ *Report of the Evicted Tenants Commission Volume II: Minutes of Evidence Appendices and Index*, H.C, 1893 – 1894, XXXI. p. 324; *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Second Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 297.

farmers benefited significantly from the agitation of the previous two decades: the reduction of rents by twenty-one and a half per cent since 1881 coincided with a growing prosperity of the farming class, as evident in the same period when the number of bank deposits increased by 258 per cent.⁹⁰ This prosperity was evident in the rising living standards in this period, and despite the economic recession, observers noted better living and standards of dress amongst the people of the county.⁹¹ This penchant for quality goods and better standards was evident in the nature of farm work. It was reported that modern equipment such as ploughs and mowers was being increasingly used by the farming class. Accompanying rising standards of living and prosperity in general, it was reported tenants were adopting more progressive and improved methods of farm cultivation.⁹² This in part coincided with the greater education of the farmer on farming practices, but it was also because of the fact that farmers, who had succeeded in obtaining fixity in their holdings or purchased their lands, were now more eager to maintain them.⁹³

But the economic gains secured during the land agitation, which had been successful in drawing attention to the plight of farmers' interests in the countryside, failed in some respects. The economic conditions of small holders were not fully addressed in their entirety during the period of the land agitation of the late nineteenth century. Many smallholders and small farmers obtained little benefit from the land act. This group – whose needs were somewhat overshadowed by the demands of the comfortable farmers who dominated the League - eked out a bare subsistence on their holdings, and found it difficult to meet the purchase demands of their landlords under the new legislation. Emigration (which was mostly to cities in America, England and Australia) became the safety valve of the small farmer – providing the family at home with a steady income and making provision for those sons and daughters unable to acquire land either through inheritance or marriage, a means through which they could obtain a

⁹⁰ *Report of the Evicted Tenants Commission Volume II: Minutes of Evidence Appendices and Index*, H.C., 1893 – 1894, XXXI. p 41; *Report from the select Committee on Land Acts Ireland together with the proceedings of the committee minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, HC, 1894, XIII. p. 738

⁹¹ Shand, *Letters from the west of Ireland*, p. 166

⁹² *Royal Commission of Inquiry into the procedure and practice and the methods of valuation followed by the land commission, the land judges court, and the civil bill courts in Ireland, and the land acts and the land purchase acts: minutes of evidence and index*, H.C. 1898, XXXV, pp 86-88

⁹³ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 201

livelihood.⁹⁴ The small farmer's animosity became increasingly targeted at the grazier - who continued to amass land in the 1880s, driving up its price and aggravating the congestion in small holding regions in the north-east and west of the county. While grazing affected the nature of agitation in the small holding regions during the land agitation, when moonlighting raids and the boycott of 'grass grabbers' and graziers was common, it was an issue which was still very much ignored during the Land League and National League.⁹⁵ This was perhaps because graziers and farmers were often members of the movement. Two of the principal men who introduced the Land League into the county both owned tracts of pastoral holdings from 80 to 500 acres.⁹⁶ Others were 'gombeen men' who had come from the shop-keeping class in the towns but had recently purchased holdings in the countryside.⁹⁷ While the small farmers provided the mobilisation in the push for peasant proprietary and reduced rents during the land agitation, organisers directed little of their energies to highlighting the poverty amongst the congested small holding population and in areas such as north-west Clare in particular, their inability to compete with neighbouring prosperous and large scale graziers. Although there were signs of anti-grazier opinion amongst some land organisers, the grazing issue did not become part of the mainstream objective of the agrarian agitation in Clare until the emergence of the United Irish League locally in 1898.

But who were graziers? Graziers were often landlords or those who came from established families of grazing in the county and as such associated with members of the aristocracy. But while some, as in the case of Clare, were known to be socially elevated, others mixed well in less exalted social and political circles. In Clare, some 'gombeen graziers' were associated with the Fenian movement in the 1860s, while others were amongst those arrested under the Protection of Person and Property Act of 1881 for their association with agrarian activism, such as James F. Daly, a publican and

⁹⁴ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 184.

⁹⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, p. 438.

⁹⁶ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, pp 447, 467

⁹⁷ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 187

farmer from Kilmurry Ibrickane, west Clare, who was an old Fenian.⁹⁸ These men became particularly associated with tenurial reform after the passage of the Land Act of 1881.⁹⁹ This was because graziers were often leaseholders and were therefore excluded from benefits of the recent land act. Through their involvement in the Land and National League in 1880s, these men sought to benefit from the ongoing agitation. The majority of those giving evidence to the Land Commission in Clare in 1885 were leaseholders (and some were members of the National League) who complained of the benefits afforded to other farmers. In the early period of the land agitation these men could be quite nationalistic, in that they were often just as critical as most nationalists in their condemnation of British legislation (particularly legislation which affected them) and just as much a bitter enemy of the landlord as was the smaller tenant farmer. In 1885, Solomon Frost of Sixmilebridge, a tenant of 450 acres, launched a scathing attack against the local landlord, Vere Forester, who allegedly augmented some of his holdings and charged excessive rents to both himself and his fellow tenants, something which Frost believed was personally motivated.¹⁰⁰ Up until the period 1887 (when leaseholders were eventually admitted under the act's provisions) this group was quite a prominent element in their campaign for land reform.¹⁰¹

These men had an impact within local politics, and their position was also well known to influence decisions in their favour in local elections. Such was the case of Timothy Flannagan of North Clare, who was found to have been giving 'some of the worst disposed men in the locality, whiskey' sometime before the local government elections in 1902.¹⁰² These men were also socially popular through their involvement in associations such as the GAA. This was the case of the landlord and grazier O'Donnellan Blake Forester, Kilfenora, a member of the GAA, Justice of the Peace (but removed from the office in 1887) and National League supporter who owned extensive

⁹⁸ *CI*, 29 October 1881; *CJ*, 19 March 1868; CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 18 June 1902, 27158/S

⁹⁹ David Seth Jones, *Graziers Land Reform and Political Conflict in Ireland* (Washington, DC, 1995) p. 162.

¹⁰⁰ *Report of Her majesties Commissioners of Inquiry into the working of the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1870 and the Acts amending the same*, HC, 1881, XVIII pp 713-718. He alleged that he charged excessive rent to tenants because they didn't vote in his favour in past elections (pre 1872 Ballot Act) and in one instance, against a tenant whom he saw cooking an expensive piece of bacon in his kitchen.

¹⁰¹ Jones, *Graziers Land Reform and Political Conflict in Ireland*, p. 170.

¹⁰² CO904/75, Reel 40, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', April 1902.

tracts of land in north Clare and south-west Galway.¹⁰³ However, it was also evident that some such individuals supported the nationalist and agrarian movement simply to avoid the censure of the local community at a time when intimidation was rife. Bernard Becker, on a tour of Clare in 1881, noted that in the Ennis area graziers were often the most generous subscribers to branches of the Land League, 'either by sympathy, or as is quite probable, by terror'.¹⁰⁴ Indeed many of them, for these very reasons, continued to support the land campaigns in the county in the early twentieth century.

These graziers seem to have predominated in the North West in the Burren, occupying the Union of Ballyvaughan, and also in the middle and northern parts of the county in Corofin and Ennis, land which was particularly suited to the breeding and grazing of cattle.¹⁰⁵ It is not clear when exactly grazing became a major issue in the public affairs of late nineteenth century Clare, but many individuals had consolidated their holdings in the immediate aftermath of the famine period – buying up vast tracts of land in areas such as the Burren, North Clare, where the number of those occupying farms of under thirty acres declined by up to fifty-six per cent since the famine.¹⁰⁶ This class of men were not as much hated however, as the 'nouveau riche' graziers of the 1880s.¹⁰⁷ The impression given by newspaper reports and retrospective nationalist accounts is that this class capitalised on the economic recession of the late 1870s. However at this time, no significant increase occurred in the extent of grazing land in the county. In fact, the amount of land devoted to grazing in the county declined in the period 1877-1879, and it appears that graziers were as much affected by this economic downturn as was the

¹⁰³ *CJ*, 8 April 1886, 6 February 1888; *MN*, 26 March 1887.

¹⁰⁴ Bernard Becker, *Disturbed Ireland* (London, 1881) p. 192.

¹⁰⁵ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Second Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, pp 271-296; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1878*, H.C. 1878-1879, LXXV, p.55; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1880*, H.C. 1881, xciii, p. 5; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1881*, H.C. 1882, LXXIV, p. 19; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1882*, H.C. 1883, LXXVII, p. 19; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1891*, H.C. 1892, LXXXVIII, p. 37; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland for the year 1898*, H.C. 1899, CVI, p. 35; *Agricultural Statistics of Ireland with a detailed report on agriculture for year 1906*, H.C. 1908, CXXI, p. 24; *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Appendix to the 10th Report: Minutes of Evidence (taken in counties Galway and Roscommon, 18 December to 4 October 1907) and documents relating thereto*, H.C., 1908, XLII, p. 153; Shand, *Letters in the West of Ireland*, pp 163-164; *CJ*, 26 October 1908

¹⁰⁶ This is the number of small holders [of stock only i.e. cattle, cow, etc] in the barony of the Burren under thirty acres, from 1847 to 1853. The population, for the barony declined by approximately 12,786 in 1841, to 8,742 in 1851, a decline of over thirty per cent in ten years. Clarkson, *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Agricultural Statistics Crops and Stocks*, SN: 3575. Clarkson, *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Population*, . SN: 3578.

¹⁰⁷ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence* (Dublin, 1907) p. 187

small farmer.¹⁰⁸ In fact the only time after that the numbers of those occupying grazing land (i.e. over 200 acres or more) matched those before the economic recession was in 1906 – a year in which graziers’ increasing augmentation of landholdings precipitated the ‘grazing war’.¹⁰⁹

The growing prosperity of graziers in the aftermath of the famine was one of the reasons why this social group were particularly resented. It was generally well known that areas now particularly associated with grazing (such as the Burren) were populated regions prior to the famine.¹¹⁰ But other reasons also influenced the way in which graziers became increasingly the targets of nationalist antipathy. As landlords became increasingly redundant following the 1903 land act, a new target for disgruntled tenants became evident in Irish society. Graziers have been described as the ‘degenerate offspring of landlordism’ and certainly in Clare came to replace the landlord in some areas as the target of popular hatred.¹¹¹ Such graziers were particularly disliked because they occupied the best land.¹¹² This had the capacity to inflame tensions in areas such as Ennistymon Union, where they often tended to own thriving grazing lands near that occupied by small holders. In many instances, the grazier did not occupy his land, and in the case of Clare, it was not uncommon to see the major gap between rich and poor – with vast tracts of uninhabited lands held by graziers in the same parish or town lands where small holding and over-population predominated. In the words of Fr. P. Glynn in Kilrush: ‘the cruel thing is that, side by side with these miserable uneconomic holdings, or at a distance of twenty to thirty miles of them, there are ranches of hundreds of acres with no human habitation except a herd’.¹¹³ There were also a multitude of other reasons why graziers became particularly detested. They were accused of having made little or no investment in the local community. As the same witness commented, ‘bullocks and sheep don’t wear boots and clothes, neither do they eat bread’.¹¹⁴ Rather than engaging with and buying stock from local farmers, graziers often went to nearby

¹⁰⁸ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Appendix to the eleventh report*, H.C., 1908, XLII, p. 90

¹⁰⁹ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Appendix to the eleventh report*, H.C., 1908, XLII, p. 90

¹¹⁰ Shand, *Letters from the west of Ireland*, p. 164

¹¹¹ Jones, *Graziers Land Reform and Political Conflict in Ireland*, p. 229.

¹¹² Shand, *Letters from the west of Ireland*, p. 163; *CJ*, 26 October 1908

¹¹³ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 187

¹¹⁴ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 187

markets such as Limerick to buy their cattle for fattening.¹¹⁵ These grazing lands were often held by outsiders, who succeeded in evoking the hostility of local farmers who believed that they had, as natives of the district, territorial claims on such holdings. In Corofin, most of the land was held by individuals from outside the county, many of whom were from Limerick: there was a tinge of resentment in one farmer's evidence when he complained that most of the lands were 'held by outsiders'.¹¹⁶ Perhaps such graziers might have been held in more esteem, if they engaged the local community through the employment of labour. But the nature of their work often meant that many did not employ labour and it was reported that many 'simply keep a herd'.¹¹⁷ In such large holdings and living beside the small occupiers there was 'no one residing on farms except herds and a couple of dogs'.¹¹⁸ The methods pursued by graziers also aggravated the tenant farmer. In comparison to the farmer whose farm was often kept in the family name for some generations, graziers treated the land as capital, something which they would willingly relinquish once their desired profit was obtained. In this manner they were considered as 'not useful members of society'. They did not invest much capital in the land: 'in point of fact, they only invest money in the purchase of young stock in the spring'.¹¹⁹ These habits contrasted with the habits pursued by the industrious farmer, who was interested in making the most of his holding. Many farmers regretted the way these graziers

neglect their land...It is a great pity that the small farmer or labourer should have to go to America when he sees alongside him, over the fence, a farmer or landlord who has 100 or 200 acres of land, say 100 Irish acres of land, which ought to carry thirty five or forty cows, not doing so the way the land ought to be treated. It is carrying twenty five cows and it is robbing the country of the balance.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 220.

¹¹⁶ The 'outsiders' referred to were from Limerick, Ballinasloe, Ennis and Ennistymon. *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 177

¹¹⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, p.717

¹¹⁸ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 177

¹¹⁹ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, p.717

¹²⁰ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 180.

While some graziers had a long history of operating in the county, those who aroused particular animosity were the gombeen graziers. According to one observer, as soon as one grazier's fortunes broke down, 'a shopkeeper, a professional man or a returned American or Australian tries his luck at grazing, and spend [sic] upon bullocks and sheep the money they have obtained in their shops and professions' – most of which money, he stressed, was obtained from the farmer.¹²¹ But the anger against the grazier was not solely economic, it was also emotive. To the tenant farmer, graziers were not considered to have the same claims to tenure nor the right to the land as had the tenant farmers. The tenant's interest in his holding was described as being 'sentimental' stretching back in the popular imagination to a period of plantation and conquest – romanticised in nationalist literature - and reflected in one tenant's demand to 'live and thrive in his own native soil'.¹²² This was something that was frequently re-echoed during the grazing campaign when small holders, in their attacks against graziers claimed their rightful attachment to the soil.¹²³

As the United Irish League swept the county in 1898, graziers became targeted by the national campaign initiated by activists. The objects of the early movement were to restore evicted tenants to their holdings and the redistribution of grazing lands. The movement showed signs of catching on in west Clare, where tenant distress and evictions had been ongoing on some estates since 1897.¹²⁴ In connection with evictions and the surrendering of holdings, large numbers of derelict farms (some unoccupied for several years) were left vacant and were to become the source of much contention throughout the countryside.¹²⁵ However, lacking effective leadership and a large recruitment base, the UIL in its early period was relatively small – numbering some six

¹²¹ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 187

¹²² *LL*, 6 September 1889.

¹²³ *CC*, 25 April 1908

¹²⁴ *LL*, 1, 12 November 1897; CO904/68, Reel 34, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', March 1898; April 1898; May 1898; July 1898; CO904/69, Reel 35, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', August 1898; September 1898.

¹²⁵ In May 1898 the county had 122 evicted farms and 44 derelict farms in the county, CO904/68, Reel 34, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', April 1898, May 1898, July 1898; CO904/69, Reel 35, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', August 1898, September 1898, October 1898, November 1898, December 1898; CO904/75, Reel 40, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', April 1902.

branches and 388 members in 1898.¹²⁶ Mobilised by local agitators and MPs, the second phase of UIL activism (1900 to 1903) was more powerful than the first and witnessed a greater mobilisation.

Buoyed up by local agitators and MPs, the leadership of the UIL expanded throughout 1900. Once considered by the constabulary as simply an association for ‘broken down farmers’ in the west of the county, the League increasingly attracted affluent elements, including traders, shopkeepers, large farmers and district councillors.¹²⁷ While the clergy had initially kept aloof, many joined as the movement expanded in 1900.¹²⁸ Its revival was accelerated by the increasing mobilisation of local agitators and MPs following the parliamentary elections in the county in July and by increasing economic distress, bad prices for cattle and hay, ongoing rains and complaints of high rents, all of which had the capacity to arouse support for the movement.¹²⁹ The constabulary accurately predicted in the winter of 1900 that in ‘the practical failure in the potato crop and consequent distress the UIL may become sufficiently powerful to do much harm’.¹³⁰ The movement was set to climb throughout the county, reaching thirty-five branches in 1900 and almost doubling to sixty-six in 1902 and 4,329 members (when the League reached its peak).¹³¹

The agitation of the United Irish League was not much different to that carried out by its predecessors, the Land League and National League. Local branches of the League orchestrated much of the agitation at ground level. These branches issued threats of boycotting and intimidation against ‘grabbers’ and their associates. Branches of the United Irish League in Inagh and Kilshanny, north west Clare launched boycotting campaigns against a local shopkeeper and auctioneer named McInerney, who had

¹²⁶ CO904/20, Reel 8, ‘United Irish League, Miscellaneous Cases’, Quarterly Returns Relating to Branches, 1898-1921

¹²⁷ CO904/69, Reel 35, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, January 1899; CO904/74, Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, February 1902

¹²⁸ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 17 May 1901, 24554/S; CO904/71, Reel 37, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, August 1900; CO904/74, Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, February 1902

¹²⁹ *LL*, 15 August, 3 October 1900; CO904/71, Reel 37, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, August 1900, September 1900; CO904/72, Reel 38, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, December 1900;

¹³⁰ CO904/71, Reel 37, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, August 1900.

¹³¹ CO904/20, Reel 8, ‘United Irish League, Miscellaneous Cases’, Quarterly Returns Relating to Branches, 1898-1921.

recently occupied a surrendered holding.¹³² Public meetings attended by the clergy drew attentions to his most recent actions in the district, the campaign made McInerney notorious in the public eye, while those who had associated with him were boycotted and had their cattle mutilated.¹³³ While outrage was used in connection with the UIL agitation, it was not on the same scale as it had been under the Land League and National League. The police noted that ‘the people are so well disciplined and know so well what would follow if they withstood the League that there is now no necessity for crime’.¹³⁴ This campaign became a highly modern constitutional movement, and utilised much of modern means to spread its publicity. A growing newspaper readership meant that the new movement interacted with the popular press and the success of the United Irish League in Clare was considered by the constabulary to be due to newspapers such as the *Clareman*, which published the UIL’s edicts and the names of obnoxious persons.¹³⁵ Indeed, it was considered that much of the campaign against McInerney was orchestrated through boycotting notices published in the *Clareman*, which he later prosecuted for libel in 1902.¹³⁶ However, not everyone was as determined as McInerney to fight back against his assailants. In the west of the county, graziers were ready to capitulate and co-operate with the United Irish League after protracted campaigns of boycotting had left many in financial ruin and unable to manage their farms. This was certainly very successful in disturbed regions such as in Kilmurry Ibrickane, where the branch of the UIL had succeeded in getting three graziers to give up their farm after they were condemned by the local branch.¹³⁷

However, while at ground level the period 1898-1903 was generally characterised by an organised attack on graziers and occupiers of evicted farms, it was apparent that as the push for land purchase increased, landlords rather than graziers became more directly

¹³² CO904/76, Reel 41, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, October 1902.

¹³³ SR, 1 February 1902; CJ, 17 April, 10 July 1902; CO904/75, Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, July 1902; CO904/76, Reel 41, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, December 1902.

¹³⁴ CO904/74, Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, January 1902.

¹³⁵ CJ, 1 December 1902; CO904/76, Reel 41, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, September 1902.

¹³⁶ CJ, 9 June 1902; CO904/76, Reel 41, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, December 1902.

¹³⁷ CO904/74, Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, December 1901.

targeted by the League's activism.¹³⁸ This was probably in part due to the fact that, as the movement's recruitment base widened so too did its range of objectives. The movement now increasingly attracted a disparate group of people for personal motives and specifically local reasons: (i.e. that were merely looking for publicity, an increase in business, an attempt to secure election in the district and county councils or even to aggravate and induce family squabbles for land). Much of the agrarian violence which was often attributed to political disputes at this time was actually connected with 'battles within the family'.¹³⁹ Such squabbles were evident in the case of Michael Lynch, a chairman of the Ennis Board of Guardians, and a member of the Dysart UIL, located in Corofin, who became the object of an agrarian outrage in November 1902. This attack was committed by a man named Kelly, in a dispute concerning possession of a farm. The dispute was a family one, the holding in question being the possession of Lynch's aunt, and Kelly, who was the aunt's nephew through marriage, was eager to compete for control of this holding. Following the attack, Lynch organised a boycotting campaign against a third man, O'Dea, who happened to be in the locality occupying holdings from which a tenant had been evicted some years previously, in 1895.¹⁴⁰ While the campaign against O'Dea lasted for some months and embittered feelings against him locally, the real motive for the boycotting campaign, the police believed, had nothing to do with O'Dea at all, but was an extension of the squabble that was then ongoing between Kelly and Lynch.¹⁴¹ According to the constabulary the whole affair was simply a popularity contest for Lynch, who wanted to show Kelly through his launch of the boycott locally, 'how much support he has in Doora', and thereby deter him from coveting the farm. Lynch further sought to tarnish Kelly's image locally at the branch of the UIL, causing a split between its members when he accused Kelly and his family of taking land from emergency men.¹⁴²

But while such petty disputes were by no means uncommon, there were also far loftier reasons why many became increasingly involved in the UIL at this time. The agitation then ongoing began to concern itself with more than just the grazing question as it had

¹³⁸ Campbell, *Land and revolution*, p. 129.

¹³⁹ Carolyn Conley, *Melancholy Accidents*, pp 51-53.

¹⁴⁰ CO904/74, Reel 40, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', February 1902.

¹⁴¹ SR, 1 February 1902.

¹⁴² CO904/76, Reel 41, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', December 1902.

in its initial beginnings, and served to satisfy the national objective of a reunified parliamentary campaign for Home Rule, whose supporters were now at the helm of the popular movement. By boycotting evicted holdings and surrendered farms taken by graziers, the UIL also aimed to drive the final nail into the coffin of landlordism. In its attacks on graziers, the agitation had the effect of driving down the competition for land, making it difficult for landlords to obtain a profit for their holdings. Such was the case on the estate of Mrs. Moroney in Miltown Malbay: when her land was boycotted for some twenty years, she was unable to get anyone to till or work the land, thus leaving her at considerable expense.¹⁴³ The agitation served to make such landlords more accommodating to their existing tenants. For tenants in arrears of rent and under threat of eviction, the UIL also succeeded in inducing landlords to negotiate their rent terms on a more satisfactory basis for the tenant, since eviction was futile when no one could be found to occupy the land. In both Kilmurry McMahon and Kilrush for instance, evicted tenants, who were prominent in the UIL locally, had succeeded in being reinstated in their holdings by their landlords.¹⁴⁴ The conditions for negotiation with their landlords were becoming favourable to the tenants in Scariff where members of the UIL went ahead and bought lands.¹⁴⁵ With this contentment and as the agitation quietened down following government proclamation in 1902, it was reported that

In many instances tenants are several years in arrears as landlords are unwilling to evict because they know no one will venture to take the land, and will recognise in [sic] the unwritten law, and they cannot work the farm on this course has a demoralising effect on the defaulting tenant and is hard on the honest industrious man.¹⁴⁶

Four tenants took back their farms in December, owing in all probability to the fact that the landlords, weary of a long and unprofitable struggle, consented to give back the farms to the old tenants on terms which in the first instance would not have been granted. As the agitation died down in the early part of 1903, the county was reported

¹⁴³ CO904/76, Reel 41, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', October 1902.

¹⁴⁴ CO904/76, Reel 41, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', October 1902; CO904/74, Reel 40, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', January 1902

¹⁴⁵ CO904/75, Reel 40, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', April 1902.

¹⁴⁶ CO904/76, Reel 41, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', December 1902.

to be settling down and ‘the people appear to be waiting for the Promised Land bill and with a desire to see this very vexed question being settled’.¹⁴⁷

The passage of the Land Act did succeed in alleviating the ‘vexed question’ of land tenure for those farmers who participated in the United Irish League. There were twenty estates and 127 purchasers under the land act from 1903 to 1907.¹⁴⁸ In fact, many defected from their involvement in the UIL once their holdings were purchased under the more agreeable terms of the 1903 Land Act.¹⁴⁹ This aroused the fears of political agitators and members of the IRB who believed that once the land question was settled the farming class would subsequently become ‘west Britons’.¹⁵⁰ But the Land Act and the agitation which had preceded it did not conciliate all the Clare tenants. While agitators during the UIL campaign were successful in drawing attention to the problems of grazing, and some tenants had succeeded in getting graziers to surrender their grazing lands, the issue had yet to be effectively addressed. In the wake of the 1903 land act no attempt was made to relieve the problems of congestion in parts of the county by advocating a redistribution of grazing lands – something which was proposed by the UIL but forgotten about as the movement pushed for land tenure. Thus, the land act once again conspicuously favoured the strong farmers as opposed to the struggling smallholder.¹⁵¹

The condition of small holders was not taken into account by new legislation. One clergyman in west Clare complained that the land act of 1903 had not given any relief to ‘the rotten and rigid communities in the west of Ireland’ and has been practically a dead letter in the county owing to the high prices demanded by landlords for their estates.¹⁵² In western regions, (where the agitation was at its most acute throughout the years) small holders under ten pounds valuation (averaging roughly about twenty five acres) were living in a state of poverty, their holdings unable to sustain them, and they

¹⁴⁷ CO904/76, Reel 41, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, December 1902.

¹⁴⁸ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Second Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 298. It was reported that by 1907, the estate commissioners had entered into the purchase of 11,232 acres of land in Clare and of this 22,845 had already been vested in 700 and more tenant purchasers. CC, 22 February 1908.

¹⁴⁹ CC, 14 September 1907

¹⁵⁰ CBS, 1903, 28288/S

¹⁵¹ P. J. Drudy, *Ireland: Land Politics and People* (Cambridge, 1982) p. 88

¹⁵² *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 190.

had little available means of purchasing those holdings. Three unions in particular, where the number of smallholdings proliferated and was unable to sustain the tenants on the soil, stood out from the rest in terms of actual poverty and congestion. These were the unions of Kilrush (where fifty-eight per cent of tenants occupied holdings under ten pounds) Ennistymon (sixty-four per cent) and Scariff (fifty-six per cent). Many electoral divisions in these unions were constituted almost entirely of small holders. In Cloonaha, Ennistymon, north-west Clare, eighty per cent of the area was occupied by smallholders and no one occupied land above fifty pounds valuation. Smallholdings also existed to a great extent in Cahermurphy, located in Kilmihil, Kilrush Union, where eighty-one per cent of the population lived on small holdings and only one person occupied a holding in the district valued at fifty pounds. While in the union of Scariff, ninety-one per cent of the holders of land in Cahermurphy (a town land north of Feakle) were less than ten pounds while no holders occupied land of fifty pounds and above. Agitators in such districts complained of the lack of available land with which to improve the tenant's livelihood.

Some of the statistical studies of the early years of the twentieth century claimed that 'nine tenths of people[are] in starvation while the one tenths have too much'¹⁵³ Of the three unions, Ennistymon had the greatest number of smallholders and here, to aggravate their resentment at their condition, graziers often held lands side by side with them. This was evident in microcosm in the electoral district of Killilagh, Doolin, north-west Clare, which had the greatest number of holdings in the union occupied by smallholders (eight-three per cent). This region showed a huge discrepancy between rich and poor with two holdings of above three hundred pounds valuation in the same division. Some of this land was in the property of the landlord, H.V. McNamara who owned some twelve thousand acres, two thousand of which he grazed and let on the eleven months system.¹⁵⁴ Upon this grazing land there were reported to have been about five herdsmen – besides their dwellings there were 'no other houses'.¹⁵⁵ Similar divisions between rich and poor were evident in the union of Scariff, in Inniscaltra

¹⁵³*Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 218.

¹⁵⁴ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, pp 166, 168

¹⁵⁵*Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 166

North, (a townland near Mountshannon north-east Clare), where sixty-five per cent of the population occupied land below ten pounds while one holder occupied land of £300 and above.¹⁵⁶

In areas with such a high proportion of smallholders much of the land was poor, and here graziers often occupied the most productive soil. In Killilagh, Doolin, (located in Ennistymon Union), graziers occupied what they considered some of the best fattening lands in the county while those houses under four pounds valuation were mostly on the rocky mountain.¹⁵⁷ Unable to obtain a profit from their holdings, the sale of fish and turf was often used to supplement income for smallholders in the union of Kilrush. In the divisions of Kilmurry McMahon and Clonadrum located along the north-west of the county:

Poor people on the coast live principally by fishing and burning kelp, and drawing seaweed, and selling it in winter and spring time to the farmers. They have no land attached to their houses, but have to go miles into the country districts to till what is commonly known as conacre lettings from year to year.¹⁵⁸

Further south-west in Sragh, Doonbeg, the small-holding population lived in

Miserable cabins built of bog sods and in fact not fit for human habitation; their holdings are very small, and not large enough to maintain the poor people in any way approaching decency. The poor people in this town-land mainly subsist on earnings that accrue from cutting and saving turf, and loading it on the siding on the South Clare railway.¹⁵⁹

In Scariff Union, tenants in congested regions like Mountshannon and Inniscaltra North, in the north-east of the county, lived in unproductive lands along the mountain side. 'The holdings are in most cases small and poor, consisting of a few patches of reclaimed mountain, with a few acres of healthy mountain attached. The occupiers

¹⁵⁶ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 216.

¹⁵⁷ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, pp 166, 170

¹⁵⁸ In Clonadrum, 60 per cent of holdings were below ten pounds valuation and five per cent of holdings were above fifty pounds; in Kilmurry McMahon, sixty-two per cent of holdings were under ten pounds and four per cent were above fifty pounds. *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p.193.

¹⁵⁹ In Dromellihy, seventy-one per cent of holdings were below ten pounds and one per cent of holdings above fifty pounds. *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 193.

usually buy some hay, and put their cattle to graze by the month'.¹⁶⁰ With the economic issues of these smallholders unaddressed, conflict emerged against graziers became particularly acute in these small holding regions throughout the county in 1907.¹⁶¹

The new movement utilised a more constitutional method of enforcing its demands. Although it sometimes had the capacity to escalate into violence, cattle driving collectively mobilised large communities and by driving cattle off graziers' holdings, succeeded in drawing attention to and preventing the expansion of, grazing in the county. The protest adopted the forms of previous land agitation through its use of intimidation and boycott. But unlike the earlier land movements, moonlighting did not to a large extent become part of this land campaign. By the late nineteenth century moonlighting had in general had become a synonym for all types of crime in the countryside, and a variety of moonlighting attacks were carried for many reasons, not simply against graziers or landlords, but during local elections, against candidates running for poor law boards, family members, by men who were refused a hand in marriage, some were even carried out by individuals against themselves so they could make exaggerated compensation claims at the next assizes.¹⁶² Many of the most prominent moonlighting gangs, the police considered, resided within the town of Ennis, where members were increasingly hired by wealthy individuals to commit outrages on personal enemies.¹⁶³ Though it is not clear from the sources whether the individuals involved in the outrages had changed, these gangs had obviously departed from the solely agrarian aims of former combinations and were connected 'not so much from working of secret societies as from the malice of individuals who employ for their commission men whose fitness for such work has been acquired in the ranks of those societies'.¹⁶⁴ According to the special branch, 'there are nests of those professional

¹⁶⁰In Mountshannon seventy-eight per cent of holdings were under ten pounds and two per cent of holdings were above fifty pounds. *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 216

¹⁶¹Statistics on holdings sizes taken from: *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Second Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, pp 271-296.

¹⁶²CO903/5, p. 47; *CJ*, 24 February, 20 March 1890; CO903/4, p. 45; Lord Morley, *Recollections* (London, 1917), vol. 2, p. 29.

¹⁶³CBS 6186/S Annual report of crime special branch for the year 1892, Western Division. This was also the case in Kerry, Paschal Grousset, *Ireland's Disease: Notes and Impressions* (London, 1888) p. 123.

¹⁶⁴CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, August 1889, 'Secret Society Reports and Outrages', CBS 6181/S Annual report of crime special branch for the year 1892, Western Division

criminals throughout the greater part of Clare'.¹⁶⁵ While many still operated on this capacity by 1900, many of them had emigrated, which supports the impression given by the constabulary that the majority of these 'hired men' were in a precarious financial condition, resulting in their involvement in this form of paid outrage.¹⁶⁶ Therefore at this time, moonlighting did not become part of the UIL as it had been connected with the previous land movements. In comparison to the old land agitation, and its association with agrarian violence through moonlighting, the new movement utilised a more constitutional method of enforcing its demands. Although it sometimes had the capacity to escalate into violence, cattle driving collectively mobilised large communities and by driving cattle off grazier's holdings, succeeded in drawing attention to and preventing the expansion of grazing in the county.

A discrepancy existed however, between the aims of the leadership and the ambitions of the movement's rank and file. Some members of the United Irish League were more moderate in their approach towards grazing because most, if not all, were large farmers themselves. An analysis of membership of the UIL in 1907 in Clare shows that members tended to come from the large farmer, grazing class as large farmers, eldest farmer's sons, publicans, shopkeepers and farmer-shopkeepers.¹⁶⁷ The constabulary noted that it was 'for self protection' that such individuals were 'induced to join' the branch. In Quin near Ennis, a 'man named Corbett belongs to the Quin branch and apparently takes an interest in it but he considers this necessary because he holds a good deal of land under the eleven months system'.¹⁶⁸ In some instances the branches of the UIL served to preserve the interests of the wealthy and not the poor. The Crusheen secretary of the UIL published notices threatening non-members at the same time as he was building a house on an evicted farm. In other instance a boycotting campaign was launched against a 'grabber' by the branch president, a substantial farmer of a hundred

¹⁶⁵ CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, August 1889, 'Secret Society Reports and Outrages'; CO904/70, RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports, June 1900

¹⁶⁶ CO904/70, Reel 36, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', June 1900

¹⁶⁷ Taken from Census of Ireland 1901, County Clare; See also Fergus Campbell, 'The Social Dynamics of Nationalist Politics in the west of Ireland 1898-1918', *Past and Present* (2004) pp 172-210; *Land and revolution*.

¹⁶⁸ CO904/76, Reel 41, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', August 1902.

acres, who initiated the campaign for personal reasons, being desirous of acquiring these holdings for himself.¹⁶⁹

However, the principles of the movement were exercised much more vigorously in congested districts such as Ennistymon and Ballyvaughan, which, in comparison to other branches, mobilised a greater frequency of small farmers, herds and labourers, who were intimately concerned with the grazing question. A unique aspect of the political campaign was evident in north-west Clare where both the Carron branch of Sinn Féin, as well as the Touclea, Kilfenora, and Killinaboy branches of the UIL, all within a radius of twenty miles, worked together on the grazing issue.¹⁷⁰ Many of these men were connected with the cattle driving which occurred in this region – particularly in the year 1908, when fifty-five drives took place in the region in the first eight months of the year alone.¹⁷¹ The movement seems to have accelerated following a meeting of the UIL in Touclea on 30 August, at which William Redmond, MP, told crowds present that ‘if the lands were not cleared by 1 November he would come down himself and do it’.¹⁷² Thereafter, whole districts stretching from Lisdoonvarna, Kilfenora and Doolin became jointly mobilised against the grazier. This was worst in the previously discussed district of Killilagh, Doolin, north-west Clare, where there was a huge disparity between rich and poor. The great part of these lands was in the hands of the intractable landlord H.V. McNamara, who showed reluctance to relinquish his untenanted holdings for division amongst the tenants. It was apparent that part of his reluctance to sell was motivated by the same sentimentality shared by those tenant farmers; for him, selling these lands meant that; ‘Othello’s occupation would be gone’.¹⁷³

But the demise of landlordism coincided with the emergence of an increasingly politicised tenantry. A number of cattle drives were staged against the graziers who occupied McNamara’s lands soon after the meeting in Touclea, assuming gigantic proportions following arrests in the locality on 22 September.¹⁷⁴ On this date, large crowds gathered in Kilfenora, where a speech was delivered by Dermot O’Brien MP,

¹⁶⁹ CO904/76, Reel 41, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, August 1902.

¹⁷⁰ CC, 14 March, 25 April, 21 November 1908,

¹⁷¹ *Hansards Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 5 November 1908. vol. 195 c. 1419

¹⁷² CC, 24 October 1908

¹⁷³ CJ, 6 October 1908; *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, first Appendix to the Seventh Report: Minutes of Evidence*, H.C., 1908, XL, p. 173.

¹⁷⁴ CO904/121, Reel 78, ‘Returns of Agrarian Outrages, 1903-1908’

who encouraged the crowds present to drive their cattle by daylight. After the meeting, crowds of up to three hundred were mobilised to drive the cattle off the lands Henry McNamara in Doolin, some fourteen kilometres away. The event was similar to the large scale flamboyant meetings of the Land League but it had a different edge. It was now mobilising those small holders in large scale grazing areas against an issues which was heretofore ignored. It drew rural inhabitants in these regions to spectacular events. Crowds drove the cattle from Doolin into Kilfenora, ‘being met on the way by torch bearers who escorted them up and down the village, which was illuminated’, after which a meeting was staged in the town by Dermot O’Brien MP.¹⁷⁵

The event in the area quickly escalated following the arrest of O’Brien and forty-three young men after the proposed cattle drive on 22 September, which led to an ever increasing swell of public opinion behind the cattle drivers – the overwhelmingly majority of whom were farmer’s sons.¹⁷⁶ Crowds gathered in the town of Doolin following the arrest where a cattle drive was again staged on grazing lands in the area. These cattle were driven in all directions, some *en route* to Ennis, and others on the Galway road. They were joined by crowds, mostly composed of farmers and labourers, led ‘by about fifty men carrying sods of turf, saturated with paraffin oil and held up burning on pitchforks’.¹⁷⁷ Gathering momentum, crowds gathered at cross roads, and courthouses, and in the main streets of the north-western towns. During the court proceedings against the forty or so suspects, crowds attended the court proceedings with bands and banners, where clashes occurred between police and civilians.¹⁷⁸ This conflict was renewed some days later in Doolin, between crowds and police who were returning to Doolin House, which was given to the constabulary as a temporary

¹⁷⁵ CO904/121, Reel 78, ‘Returns of Agrarian Outrages, 1903-1908’

¹⁷⁶ An identification of the names of twenty six of the forty men showed that nine were farmers sons (one of whom was also a carpenter), five were farmers, four were agri-labourers (one of whom was also a shoemaker), three were farm servants, two were quarry labourers, two were artisans and one was a herdsman. The average age was thirty-three. One was under the age of 21, fourteen were between the ages of 21-30, four between the ages of 31-40, four between the ages of 41-50 two between the age of 51-60 and one over sixty. Of the nine farmers sons analysed, six were the eldest farmer’s son (and probably the inheritors). The extent to which farmer’s sons also made up the artisan and labouring classes is evident in a social analysis of these men’s background. Of the four agri-labourers, two were actually the eldest sons of farmers. Of the three farm servants, two were also the eldest sons of farmers. While of the two artisans (a carpenter and a stone cutter) both were sons of farmers, one the eldest, the other the second eldest.

¹⁷⁷ CC, 28 September 1908.

¹⁷⁸ CJ, 1 October 1908.

barracks, by the then increasingly unpopular landlord McNamara.¹⁷⁹ The forty-four suspects, who were later released, were greeted by crowds in Ennistymon. Support for popular nationalist causes was evident in the form the procession took, with the men who were released from prison followed by large number of young men who marshalled two deep, wearing green badges on their coats. The reception which the young prisoners received further highlighted the growing gap which the land agitation succeeded in fomenting between the local population and the law. During the procession the young men went through the town and stopped outside the barracks and cheered for the prisoners for ten minutes. The whole community came behind the event, which succeeded in drawing attention to the grazing issue. Smallholders throughout north Clare were spurred on in the congested regions, and began to show a greater desire to obtain their own landholdings.¹⁸⁰

While the problem of smallholding continued to dominate local land issues in these regions and in the county, long into the twentieth century, the agitation in this first phase ended in an important concession. This was the passage of the Birrell Land Act (1909), which recognised the need to alleviate congestion due to the grazing-induced lack of access to land. Crowds who gathered to witness the release of the organiser Dermot O'Brien in Kilfenora were asked; 'what was the result of all the cattle driving? The result was the new land bill, which would take this land compulsorily from the McNamara's and place the people on the soil'.¹⁸¹ The agitation which occurred in these regions succeeded in drawing attention to the small farmers of the congested districts, an issue which had been obscured for some thirty years. The emergence of the agitation in western smallholding regions during 1900s, suggests that politicisation had extended to the smallholder – who now wielded a greater input in political affairs.

Since the 1880s, it was apparent that rural crowds were becoming successfully educated in the nature of politics and protest. Various concessions had been obtained which led to the growing politicisation of the tenant farmer. Throughout these years of land agitation, a transformation had occurred amongst the farming class. As well as obtaining valuable financial concessions through the various land acts, they succeeded

¹⁷⁹ *CC*, 21 November 1908.

¹⁸⁰ *CJ*, 15 October 1908.

¹⁸¹ *CC*, 9 January 1909.

in becoming increasingly politically conscious. This consciousness encouraged not only assertiveness regarding local economic issues, but also a strong resistance and hostility to the state in pursuit of national political objectives. As Donnelly has noted in the case of Cork, an ever growing number of farmers acquired their holdings from the 1880s onwards, which did not, as the conservatives would have hoped, succeed in pacifying tenant farmers; in fact it made him ever more closely identified with political affairs.¹⁸² In Clare as well as in Cork, it was apparent that economic issues facilitated the spread of political ideas in the late nineteenth century. Yet in the Clare context, the tenant farmer's political consciousness was not shaped by economic issues alone, and far more important in the shaping of such political ideas was modernising groups such as the IRB. The subsequent chapter analyses how this group, from the 1860s onwards, played a key part in shaping an emerging radical nationalist political thought.

¹⁸² James S. Donnelly, *The Land and the People in Nineteenth Century Cork* (London, 1975) p. 384

Chapter Three: The impact of the Irish Republican Brotherhood

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Fenians, or the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a movement committed to obtaining independence through force, became an identifiable element within rural and urban affairs. It first became the focus of political discussion of most in the county from as early as 1865, when fishermen entertained tourists with stories of its exaggerated military strength in north-west Clare.¹ While the movement never truly was secret, it was successful in capturing popular attention, which was increasingly directed towards the new movement as the decade progressed.

While discussion was evident beforehand, the IRB movement first gained organisational significance in the county in 1861, when cells were established in the county under the direction of county centres. During these tenuous beginnings, it maintained links with the Supreme Council in Dublin, and its sister organisation, the Clan Na nGael in America. Although there were some exceptions, the organisation drew most of its adherents from the lower middle class or what Lord Straithnarn so aptly identified as ‘the class above the masses’.² The expansion of the IRB in the county coincided with the emergence of politically conscious young men who had recently benefited from rising standards of education, literacy and prosperity in both town and countryside. The rank and file of the IRB movement in the county generally tended to be of a young age – while in the late nineteenth century, leadership of the organisation in most areas tended to be dominated by old Fenians, perhaps partly for symbolic reasons and partly because it was almost impossible to remove a Fenian ‘centre’ once appointed.

These members were drawn from both the town and countryside. The movement has often been portrayed as an urban phenomenon, and this was also apparent in Clare,

¹ William Whittaker Barry, *A Walking Tour Around Ireland in 1865, by an Englishman* (London, 1867) p. 199.

² Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism*, p. 21.

where a great number of its adherents came from urban centres and provincial towns.³ The IRB in the county had its origins in the county town of Ennis - and while the countryside was particularly associated with IRB activity during periods of land agitation, in the early twentieth century the movement was reported to once again increasingly confined to the towns.⁴ Towns were the havens for IRB activity. In provincial towns and urban centres, such as in the principal town of Ennis, and the western towns of Kilrush, Ennistymon and Miltown Malbay, IRB meetings were staged throughout the late nineteenth century. These centres were considered to be hotbeds of conspiracy and responsible for much of the agrarian crime (connected with IRB activity) that occurred in the surrounding countryside.⁵

Although particularly common in urban centres, the IRB in Clare was by no means exclusively urban and the organisation attracted large numbers of adherents from both town and countryside throughout the century. The impression created from the sources is that membership of the movement increased during times of heightened political activity and/or economic distress. This was particularly apparent during the heyday of the Land League, when a new IRB organisation with an agrarian character emerged that attracted quite a significant proportion of young men from the countryside, mostly small farmer's sons, into the movement.⁶ Other periods of political excitement drew large adherents from outside the traditional urban domain. Coinciding with the celebration of the 98 rebellion, when enthusiasm for separatist sentiment was high, it seems that the Clare IRB organisation had succeeded in obtaining a record number of recruits. At this time the organisation was reported to have consisted of 1,537 men and forty-two county centres.⁷ While the validity of this information is questionable – since it sometimes reveals more about the constabulary's paranoia than anything else – it was apparent that the IRB had considerable support in the county. It is perhaps more plausible, however, to assume that the average membership of the organisation was

³ R.V. Comerford, 'Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid -1860s', in Alan O'Day (ed.), *Reactions to Irish Nationalism 1865- 1914* (London, 1987) p. 24.

⁴ Joseph Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (Shannon, 1969), p. 62; CBS, 28288/S; CO904/76, Reel 41, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', September 1902.

⁵ *CJ*, 10 April 1893; CSORP.1893.8741.

⁶ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 27 September, 1899, 20022/S; Takagami, 'The Dublin Fenians 1858-1879', p. 287; CO904/16, Reel 7, Register of Home Organisations, The IRB, Report on John Devoy's trip to Ennis 1878.

⁷ CBS, 1902, 26298/S.

close to the figures recorded just prior to the Parnellite split – when the IRB was reported to have 413 members with twenty-eight cells or centres in the county.⁸

Even though the IRB was, as has been historically portrayed, only a small group of committed men, they had, nonetheless, a huge influence locally.⁹ In the late nineteenth century, these men became increasingly involved in local cultural, social and political life. From the 1860s onwards IRB objectives existed alongside and acted as an aggressive counterpart to the moderate objectives of the constitutional Home Rule movement. In the 1880s the IRB were involved in various cultural and political organisations through which they sought to arouse ‘ultra nationalist sentiment’ and facilitate Fenian designs for political independence.¹⁰ Through their involvement in organisations which sought political, social and economic reform these men challenged the authority of the existing state and offered a somewhat more radical alternative to constitutional agitation. Even if the IRB was only comprised of a handful of committed men, the radical nationalist ideas they shared were largely felt in local socio-economic and political life from the 1860s onwards.

In the 1860s and 1870s the IRB movement became an intrinsic part of local political debate and discussion. This was facilitated by the extensive publicity which the movement had succeeded in generating following their attempt at an insurrection (during which there were outbreaks in Corofin, north Clare, and Kilbaha, south-west Clare) in 1867.¹¹ Since the event occurred locally and many individuals had connections or relations who were involved or suspected of being involved in the movement, it soon commanded the attention of a large section of the both rural and urban audiences. This public came to increasingly sympathise with the IRB following news of the treatment of suspects who were imprisoned or transported.¹² These sympathies were intensified following the public hanging of Allen, Larkin and O’Brien

⁸ CBS, 1891, 501/S, CBS, 1891, 6186/S.

⁹ Matthew Kelly, *Fenian Ideal*, p. 2.

¹⁰ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 16 July 1900, 22369/S.

¹¹ John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (Dublin, 1929) p. 229; Michael Doheny, *The Felon's Track* (Dublin, 1920) p. 31; Murphy, *Diocese of Killaloe 1850-1904*, p. 206; Home Office Papers, Kew Archives, 45/779; Fenian Papers, F Series, Box Four, 3693F; Fenian Papers, F Series, Box One, 239F; Fenian Papers, R Series, 4516R; CSORP 1867. 4439. 4654; *CJ*, 6, 10 December 1866; 7, 25 March, 6 June, 18 July 1867; *Irishman*, 26 July 1866.

¹² Particularly after the death in 1866 of John Mantle, Ennistymon, who died enroute to America, fleeing arrest; *Irish People* (New York), 10 November 1866

in Manchester in 1867.¹³ Reports concerning the treatment of IRB suspects and the welfare of their families appeared in radical nationalist newsprint, while memorials and petitions were written up by prominent individuals (including magistrates, parish priests and Town Commissioners) requesting the release of IRB leaders in their localities.¹⁴ Building on this sentiment, the Amnesty movement, which campaigned for the release of IRB suspects, gained huge popularity in the county in 1869 and succeeded in attracting the support of diverse political and religious groups. According to a local conservative organ, the movement appealed to both Protestant and Catholic and ‘Fenian and anti-Fenian’.¹⁵

Coinciding with the growing popularisation of the movement in the county, the IRB and its ideology began to take an increasing prominence in the organisation and mode of expression of public political demonstrations. This ideology or ‘ideal’ openly and forcefully challenged and rivalled that of the constitutional movement, something that was particularly apparent in Ennis in 1869, when attempts were made by local and national IRB leaders to prevent a tenant right meeting being staged.¹⁶ Their reasons for interference in the demonstration were because they, in their own words, believed that constitutional agitation was ‘nonsense’.¹⁷ These were the views of James Conway, who sought to outline his opinions on the demonstration to a close friend and constitutionalist:

Don’t you see that Mr Lackstone [sic] as Paddy Tuohy calls him is beginning to develop himself already and denies that has ever said that Ireland should henceforth be governed according to Irish ideas. No, we are, and I fear will continue, to be governed by Larcom and the peelers. And so there is no use in making ourselves ridiculous. I think Meagher demonstrated it a nicety (?) in his sword speech: ‘the soldier is proof against an argument but he is not proof against a bullet, the man that will listen to reason, let him be reasoned with, but it is the weaponed arm of the patriot that can alone prevail against despotism’.

¹³ MacMathuna, *Kilfarboy*, pp 62-64; *CJ*, 23 November 1868; Fenian papers, Box Four, 4955F.

¹⁴ Fenian Papers, Box Fourteen, 7060R; Fenian Papers, Box 9, 4927R; *Irishman*, 9 March 1866.

¹⁵ *CJ*, 22 March 1869.

¹⁶ *Irish Freedom*, September 1912.

¹⁷ Fenian Papers, Box Nine, 4927R. Letter from James Conway to Sub-Constable Michael Naughton of RIC barracks, Tulla.

So my dear William, to the winds with their nonsense, I look not to the Lord for the redress of our grievances; neither am I one of those who look to the west.¹⁸

Placards were posted on the political platform and in public areas, and were disseminated through the crowd.¹⁹ These placards lashed out at the principal speaker, John Gray, stating that in 1865 he indirectly facilitated the imprisonment of the Fenian leaders;

Judge Keogh sat to try the Fenians.....every one of the articles ever dug up in Sir John Gray's affidavit were used to convict the prisoners. As Barry is driven from Dungarvan, where is the justice, if his far more guilty accomplice is to be favoured in Ennis?...Let the felon-setters beware, it will be only charity to give them a warning of the reception they will get²⁰

These attempts by local IRB to prevent the Tenant Right meeting were unsuccessful in Ennis – compared to Limerick and Waterford where constitutionalists were given a more hostile reception.²¹ However, such outbursts of hostility towards the tenant right movement had a noticeable effect on the local youth. In response to Fenian pressure, the Catholic Young Men's Association of Ennistymon (north Clare) pledged to abstain from political agitation until the release of the Fenian prisoners. Letters sent to the press from the association even accused those supporting Tenant Right as being 'the hirelings of the government which hanged our Manchester heroes'.²²

Expressions in support of the IRB became a powerful feature of the political demonstration in both town and countryside. In small towns and villages, local leaders succeeded in encouraging among rural audiences a greater interest in national issues. At a demonstration to mark Saint Patrick's Day in the villages of Tulla and Scariff, East Clare, in 1874 - at which Fenian members were present - the constabulary took note of

¹⁸ Sir Thomas Aiskew Larcom (1801-79), Under-Secretary of State for Ireland (1853-69); Fenian Papers, Box Nine, 4927R. Letter from James Conway to Sub-Constable Michael Naughton of RIC barracks, Tulla.

¹⁹ The Tenant Right movement was initiated in Ennis in 1850. Although it resuscitated throughout the 1850s it never seems to have appealed to popular enthusiasm. The movement had revived some months before the staging of the meeting in Ennis 1869, and appears to have died out afterwards. It was mainly kept afloat through the organisation of the clergy and was mostly a matter which concerned 'entirely for the large, or monster tenant farmers of Ireland'. While the movement never seems to have gained popularity, the issue itself was advocated by popular candidates in elections at this time. *CJ*, 29 July, 17, 30, October 1850, 15 January 1852, 24, 31, March 1856, 19 November 1868, 30 September, 7, 15, 19, 28, October 1869, 1 November 1869, 19 March 1870; *CF*, 22 July 1865.

²⁰ *CJ*, 4 November 1869

²¹ *Irish Freedom*, September, October 1912.

²² *CJ*, 11, 15 November 1869.

the ‘disloyal songs’ and ‘seditious emblems’ sported by crowds at these celebrations.²³ In Tulla five hundred people took part in a demonstration at which national airs were played, the processionists carried green flags, banners bearing nationalist mottoes and wore green scarves bound with orange and bearing a harp.²⁴ In Tuamgraney, near Scariff, a similar procession was staged by local Fenian James Whelan, where the processionists (principally artisans) sported green calico rosettes, a green flag and a banner depicting a harp and shamrock and the Fenian slogan ‘God Save Ireland’.²⁵ These social gatherings and the emblems, flags and music which accompanied them tended, in Clare as elsewhere, to foster ‘an unthinking commitment to popular causes within a very wide sector of the population’.²⁶ This was particularly apparent at election time. In Lahinch (west Clare), Scariff and Newmarket on Fergus (east Clare), Kilfenora (north west Clare) and in the principal town of Ennis, demonstrations were staged by IRB activists in support of the candidature of O’Donovan Rossa (1869) while similar demonstrations were staged by members in support of John Mitchel (then running for Tipperary) in Ennis in 1875.²⁷ Fenianism also had the capacity to increase sympathy with and consciousness of events that were happening abroad, and became a powerful feature of demonstration in support of French successes during the Franco Prussian War, in Ennis and the western towns of Kilrush and Miltown Malbay in the 1870s.²⁸ In Kilrush, members of the crowd were known to have shouted; ‘Down with England, hurrah for the Fenians’, hurrah for the French and to hell with Victoria’.²⁹ The staging of such displays in conjunction with the circulation of patriotic literature and ballads was evidence in the Clare context of what Richard English has described as the Fenian ability to ‘keep alive an alternative, aggressive nationalism’ and maintain ‘the language and rituals of separatism’.³⁰

²³ CO904/182/Reel 110, 1872-1914: ‘Armed meetings, agrarianism, street preaching, drilling, and importation of arms – reports, returns of legal advisors’ (15 April 1874).

²⁴ CO904/182/Reel 110, 1872-1914: ‘Armed meetings, agrarianism, street preaching, drilling, and importation of arms – reports, returns of legal advisors’ (15 April 1874).

²⁵ CO904/182/Reel 110, 1872-1914: ‘Armed meetings, agrarianism, street preaching, drilling, and importation of arms – reports, returns of legal advisors’ (15 April 1874).

²⁶ Maura Cronin, *Country, Class and Craft* (Cork, 1994) p.135.

²⁷ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5081R, Fenian Papers Box Ten, 5263R; Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5097R; *The Nation*, 4 December 1869; *CJ*, 18 January, 29 March 1875.

²⁸ *CJ*, 1 August, 18 September 1870, 9 March 1871.

²⁹ *CJ*, 9 March 1871.

³⁰ Richard English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Irish Nationalism in Ireland* (London, 2006) p. 191.

Through the staging and celebration of demonstrations (and the disruption of those they opposed) the Fenian organisation became an aggressive alternative to the constitutional agitation in Clare. This was evident in microcosm when local leaders organised the construction of a monument to the memory of the Manchester Martyrs in Ennis in 1877.³¹ While the monument was completed in 1882, the unveiling ceremony did not take place until 1886 and sometime after the failure of the Home Rule Bill – an opportune time for old Fenians and IRB activists to capitalise on the shortcomings of the Home Rule party and, in general, of all constitutional agitation.³² Speeches were delivered by both local and national IRB men, one of whom, George Torley (member of the Glasgow IRB) told crowds that the constitutional movement's failings provided a signal that they would need to return to the 'old path' i.e. physical force. Judging by the crowd's response there was strong support for the IRB and a visible dislike or disillusionment with constitutionalism;

We live in another time when the lives of the martyrs is sneered at - when we are told that one vote is better for Ireland than the sacrifices of all martyrs from Emmet to Allen, Larkin and O'Brien (loud cries of no, no). We are told over in Scotland by your very patriotic members, who talk in a different strain from what they do in Ireland, that Ireland does not want separation (laughter) - does not want to be cut adrift from the great empire we helped to build - does not want to be denied the proud privilege of paying England's national debt - fighting England's battle and assisting her in spreading knowledge of Christianity by the aid of the bullet and bayonet. I hope the men of Clare and Limerick will persevere in the old path, neither moving to the right nor the left, until Emmet's epitaph is traced, and our land is once more free (prolonged cheering).³³

Although demonstrations such as these had been staged throughout the county since the formation of the Amnesty movement in the 1860s, the message was still the same as late as the mid-1880s, i.e., that Fenianism was a powerful and aggressive alternative to the constitutional movement in Clare.

While the Fenian organisation and the parliamentary party differed in terms of ideology (since Fenianism was intrinsically anti-constitutional), when it came to land reform, both shared the same objectives and ambitions. This coalition of interest occurred

³¹ *CI*, 8 December 1877.

³² For unveiling see, *CJ*, 5 June 1882, laying of the foundation stone, *CI*, 22 January 1881, for more, *CI*, 27 November, 8 December 1880, 2 April, 16 June, 18 August, 12 October, 25 November 1882.

³³ *MN*, 1 December 1886, *CJ*, 2 December 1886.

especially during the period of the Land League, a movement which sought to secure land reform and eventually a peasant proprietary. For the IRB in Clare, and in other areas along the west of Ireland, land and its ownership was considered to be an important precursor to political independence. In pursuit of these twin objectives, the IRB became an aggressive counterpart to the diverse mix of constitutionalists and moderate nationalists within the Land League - and sought to radicalise the struggle for land ownership to the detriment of constitutionalists.

The IRB adopted a dual strategy through its involvement in the Land League, a strategy that was both covert and overt. Clandestine ‘moonlight’ outrages were carried by IRB-linked individuals, particularly during the period 1879-1883, against a range of individuals including landlords, ‘grass grabbers’, tenants who occupied evicted holdings, and those who conversed with boycotted individuals i.e. anyone whom they considered a ‘prop’ to landlordism which they believed barred them from their legitimate ownership of the soil.³⁴ Agrarian violence was particularly acute during Parnell’s ‘No Rent Manifesto’ in 1881. According to the authorities, the IRB in Clare was completely organised during the Land League campaign and although its members were not planning any immediate outbreak, ‘they were determined to intimidate tenants [who pay their rent] in every possible way’.³⁵ Secret society activity was particularly active in the east Clare towns of Tulla and Scariff, where eighteen identified IRB men (some of whom were centres in their respective districts) were responsible for orchestrating a system of intimidation against those paying rent in the district and for organising the firing on police night patrols.³⁶ To the north of the county in Crusheen, the IRB was involved in a number of similarly motivated agrarian attacks that were precipitated by the no rent campaign.³⁷

The IRB saw themselves as carrying out these outrages on behalf of the Land League. Members of the IRB were reputedly sworn to be true to the principles of the Land ‘League, and to commit outrages on anyone’ who violated its edicts.³⁸ However, such

³⁴ CBS, Confidential ‘B’ files, 1880-1883, Shelf number 3/716, number 67; CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, August 1889, ‘Secret Society Reports and Outrages’, CBS, 126/S

³⁵ CSORP. 1882. 19433.

³⁶ C.S.O.R.P., 1882. 19433; CSORP, 1882. 20193.

³⁷ *CJ*, 9, 12, 16, 23, 19, 26, 30, April, 3, 7, 10, 14, 24, 31 May 1883

³⁸ *CJ*, 19 April, 7 May 1883; 22, 29 January, 9 March, 23 April 1891.

aggressive methods did not represent the interests of moderate Land League members. This was particularly evident in the western town of Miltown Malbay, where a violent incident which was carried out by the IRB elicited strong condemnation from local Leaguers. During the peaceful negotiations which were ongoing between the landlord, Mrs Moroney, and the tenantry (represented by the local Land Leaguer priest, Fr. White), an IRB-related outrage was perpetrated against Mrs Moroney's servant, Leenane. The incident, which resulted in the servant's death, was perceived by moderates as an attempt to disrupt the negotiations that were then under way on the estate. However, it is possible that the IRB were actually attempting to expedite the negotiations and carried out this outrage because they considered that an intimidated landlord would be a much more generous negotiator with her tenantry.³⁹ The IRB seems to have considered the more moderate Land Leaguers too timid in their approach to the land agitation. For the stance they took within the land agitation, conservative members of the Land League often became the object of attack. In Tulla, East Clare, IRB men were responsible for carrying out an outrage against an affluent farmer and secretary of the Clooney Land League, John Degidan. Whether the outrage was simply a manifestation of social tensions (between the small and large farmer element) that were alleged to have been evident within the Land League at this time is uncertain.⁴⁰ However, it may have reflected tensions between the IRB and the League, for police ascribed the outrage to resolutions which Degidan had passed at the branch, which condemned recent outrages perpetrated by IRB men against the unpopular landlord J.P. Creagh of Tulla.⁴¹

While violent clandestine outrages were carried out against those individuals who violated the aggressive tenets of the IRB element within the Land League, similar methods were also adopted overtly within the local branches of the Land League and of its successor, the National League. The main feature of this strategy was infiltration and intimidation. For instance, members of the IRB maintained control of the National League branch in Miltown Malbay, west Clare, where they often used intimidation to

³⁹ *CJ*, 11 December 1882.

⁴⁰ *CI*, 10 September 1881.

⁴¹ CSORP. 1882. 32122.

push members to sanction objectionable and sometimes violent resolutions.⁴² These resolutions condoned the adoption of methods which moderate members considered were too extreme.⁴³ A resident of Miltown Malbay and member of the local branch stated in 1888:

Well, they generally got some member of the Land League to propose a resolution that they wished carried. And when it was rejected they threatened us. We often passed resolutions denouncing them, sometimes in their presence. I publicly charged some of them with being connected with secret societies, and denounced them for it. The police regarded my life as being in imminent danger on account of the opposition I gave the men. And they followed me for a long time, although at the time I was not aware.⁴⁴

Something similar was done by the IRB in Tubber, North Clare, where IRB members utilised the local League branch as a forum through which to push their own objectives. During the meetings of the branch, local IRB men directed boycotting notices against ‘grabbers’ to be written at the back of the league rooms.⁴⁵ Positions of power were also utilised in League branches to increase IRB control of the League’s funds. In 1882, in Tubber, the treasurer of the local branch was reluctantly sworn into the revolutionary movement by prominent IRB men, and according to his account, the League’s funds were then siphoned off into the planning and execution of outrages.⁴⁶ This practice was also hinted at by the secretary of the Ennis Land League, Patrick McInerney, who was also the IRB county centre who, at a meeting of the IRB in Ennis in 1882, stated that the funds of the League would be used to buy arms and ammunition.⁴⁷ These League funds were also utilised as a defence fund with two different objectives: they were used to defend prominent IRB men in court, and also as a sustenance fund for the families of the imprisoned during the imposition of Protection of Persons and Property Act 1881.⁴⁸

⁴² These members were known to have refused to countenance the views of their moderate members, even the local cleric Fr. White. *CI*, 12 July 1884; 28 March, 23 May, 13 June, 1885.

⁴³ *CI*, 5 June 1880. In the early years of the movement’s formation conservative members believed that the aims of the Land League movement were too radical and believed that peasant proprietorship was ‘asking too much’.

⁴⁴ *CJ*, 20 May 1888

⁴⁵ *CJ*, 19 April, 3 May 1883.

⁴⁶ *CJ*, 3 May 1883.

⁴⁷ *CJ*, 23 April 1883.

⁴⁸ *The Special Commission Act, 1888: Report of the Proceedings before the Commissioners appointed by the Act, Volume One* (London, 1890) pp 683, 684.

While at least some elements of the IRB continued to contribute to the land agitation after the first phase of the Land War (1879-1882), their support for the issue was not on the same scale until the initiation of a new directive in the quest for land reform in 1898 when landlords were no longer the sole obstacle to the quest for peasant proprietary, and activists increasingly targeted a new enemy – the grazier. Numerous members of the IRB participated in the campaign for the redistribution of lands accumulated by graziers (who were usually, buyers and sellers of livestock who occupied holdings of one hundred acres and more) and in the ongoing drive for peasant proprietary through the United Irish League and the Sinn Féin movement. These men brought with them to the new land movements the radical Fenian element of the land war: in Clare the figure heads of both these organisations were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and had participated in the Land League.⁴⁹

In comparison to the Land League of the early 1880s, however, the United Irish League distinguished itself by tackling the grazing issue head on, and this in conjunction with the inquiry conducted by the Congested Districts Board, highlighted the gulf between prosperous graziers and struggling small holders in rural areas, an issue which had heretofore been given little publicity during the land war. The tension between graziers and small holders was particularly apparent in west Clare, which became increasingly mobilised by the UIL in the last decade of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ In this part of the county, secret society men were active in support of the UIL.⁵¹ A meeting of the UIL held in Ennistymon, north Clare in late 1901, allegedly had ‘a strong contingent of secret society men and members of moonlighting gangs’ who ‘were present as sympathisers’.⁵² These men were deeply involved in agrarian outrages against graziers. In Ennistymon and in Kilrush, west Clare, this same element within the League was

⁴⁹ This was James Halpin, Land Leaguer and later executive of the UIL and Thomas O’Loughlin, Land Leaguer and later Sinn Féin. According to one (perhaps biased) member of the UIL, ‘most of the Sinn Féin men of Clare, who had reached the age of young men in ’87, were members of the National League, and as such supported the parliamentary party until forced to take other courses by irresistible logic of facts’. *CC*, 24 August 1907.

⁵⁰ *CC*, 9, 15, 25, June, 6 July 1907.

⁵¹ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 23 April 1901, 24517/S, 17 May 1901, 24554/S.

⁵² CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 5 October 1901, 25561/S; CO904/74, Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, September 1901. At the meeting, suspect John McInerney advocated the formation of commandoes in the parish and added ‘you know what I mean’.

causing ‘a good deal of annoyance to some graziers and others who have dared to violate its rules’.⁵³

Large numbers of the rank-and-file of the IRB were in turn, recruited into the United Irish League. While the IRB attempted to prevent participation in the UIL in other counties, in Clare and Limerick it was quite the other way.⁵⁴ Rank-and-file members of the underground movement were increasingly recruited into the UIL and organisers such as James Lyman toured the east and west of the county where he, in company with IRB suspects from Galway, ‘sought the assistance of the worst characters, mostly old IRB men.’⁵⁵ It was observed that Lyman ‘works among old extremists to form the nucleus of each new branch of the League’ and many IRB men were recruited into these branches, some becoming paid organisers.⁵⁶

In its initial campaign against graziers, the UIL was reported to be primarily composed of evicted tenants and farmers in economic distress.⁵⁷ However as the movement progressed, it began increasingly to attract the support of both affluent farmers and traders (i.e. shopkeepers and publicans).⁵⁸ For example, one of the men recruited as organiser was John Malone, a member of the IRB in Tulla, East Clare. Malone was a cattle jobber – which is ironic considering that cattle jobbers were amongst those who profited from the good fortunes of graziers, the same group of men who were targeted by the United Irish League. The growing involvement of such an affluent element in the United Irish League partly accounted for the movement’s increasingly moderate stance on the grazing question. This was because some members of the UIL were graziers themselves.⁵⁹ The Sinn Féin movement, however, began to attract the support (and

⁵³ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 17 May 1901, 24554/S.

⁵⁴ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 21 August 1900, 22648/S.

⁵⁵ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 21 August 1900, 22648/S.

⁵⁶ CBS, 21933/S; CO903/10 investigations regarding secret societies and individuals; CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, September 1895, 10663/S; 6 October 1899, 20110/S; 31 July 1903, 28885/S; 30 November 1903, 29218/S; 8 June 1901 24836/S; 18 July 1901, 25049/S; 5 July 1901, 24928/S.

⁵⁷ CO904/69/Reel 35, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, January 1899.

⁵⁸ CO904/74/Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, February 1902.

⁵⁹ CO904/75/Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, August 1902. See, *CC*, 18 April 1908 – O’Callaghan’s Mills, UIL; *CC*, 23 May 1908 – OGonnelloe UIL; *CC*, 22, 29 August 1908 – meeting of the East Clare executive of the UIL: ‘Ballycannon Estate’. At a meeting of the Kilnaboy UIL branch in 1908, members condemned the actions of graziers holding lands under the eleven months system. The irony was immediately apparent with the chairman, Mr P. Nagle, who was a well-known grazier himself, concurring; ‘all graziers had their agreements signed last year before they were called in by the League, but this year they have no excuse. Although I myself had my grazing

would become almost entirely comprised) of small farmers, herdsmen and agricultural labourers who were, unsurprisingly, far more vigorous in their approach towards the grazing question.

The Sinn Féin movement in Clare was closely modelled along the lines of the parent branch in Dublin – at meetings of the branch in Carron (a small townland situated in the heart of the Burren, north Clare) its members discussed national policy, read from the *Resurrection of Hungary*, argued the merits of parliamentary abstentionism, promoted Irish industries, advocated the removal of what they considered the unfair system of taxes and tariffs so as to promote economic growth and called for a redistribution of lands and a solution to the small holding problem.⁶⁰ Beneath this relatively moderate veneer, however, the Sinn Féin movement had a radical agrarian element that was run by the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Police believed that in Carron, the IRB had revived under ‘under the cover of the branch of the Sinn Féin [movement] that exists there’.⁶¹ The branch was presided over by Tomas O’Loughlin. A former Land Leaguer and old IRB man, O’Loughlin brought to the Sinn Féin movement the radical agrarian element of the Land League.⁶² This involved the adoption of radical agrarian methods to pressurise government and thus secure demands for land reform.

This reform involved the redistribution of lands in overpopulated and uneconomic small holding regions which had experienced such conditions due to the proliferation of large scale grazing. Sinn Féin branches targeted those graziers whom they considered were preventing land distribution in congested areas through their continued occupancy of large holdings. Graziers who refused to relinquish control of their lands were denounced and summoned to appear before local branches of Sinn Féin, while cattle drives were arranged at some of its meetings.⁶³ Cattle drives were a relatively new form of protest in this period and sought to threaten the grazier’s livelihood and economic

agreement signed, I was willing to sacrifice a year’s rent if called to do so. Anybody standing between the people and their just rights is unworthy of the name of an Irishman’. CC, 9 May 1908

⁶⁰ CC, 5 January, 18, 26 May, 27 July, 24, 31 August, 14 September, 7 December 1907; 11 January 1908.

⁶¹ CO904/118, Reel 77, ‘Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C’, March 1909.

⁶² Acted as Hon. Sec of the Carron Branch of the Irish National League, *United Ireland*, 6 October 1894; CO903/4, p. 30.

⁶³ CC, 6 July, 19 October, 16 November 1907, 18, 25 April 1908; CO904/118, Reel 77, ‘Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C’, April 1908; October 1909; December 1909.

stability by driving off his stock and reducing its quality in the process.⁶⁴ The Sinn Féin branch adopted violent strategies in their campaign against graziers. Arms were imported by members in pursuit of these objectives.⁶⁵ These guns were intended for the commission of outrages on herds or graziers, but were also utilised with some effect at cattle drives.⁶⁶ Though it is not clear how these guns were brought in, we do know that the majority were obtained from America, but it was reported that some were obtained by O'Loughlin from Keegan's in Dublin.⁶⁷ One gets the sense from contemporary police reports that the men involved in these activities were young and impressionable, impressed by the latest modern weaponry, which was obtained by members and – as the police reported – discussed at meetings. In 1908, a supply of arms was received by the branch, one of which was a 'colts repeating rifle', which was a relatively modern acquisition.⁶⁸ Two years later, old Fenian and Leaguer O'Loughlin told the young men of the branch that he was getting a sample rifle 'and would show it to the members before ordering further'.⁶⁹ But the members' penchant for modern weaponry had the capacity to backfire. One of the newest rifles which the branch had obtained in 1908 was apparently used by the secretary John O'Connor, a young farmer from the area, to commit suicide.⁷⁰ While the event was a tragedy, exacerbated in no small measure by the fact that both locals and police disputed the events surrounding his death, the harsh reality was that O'Connor was one of the many young men who were at this time becoming increasingly involved in militant activity, sometimes to their own detriment.⁷¹

But why did the IRB become involved in the land agitation and what did they seek to attain by aligning themselves with movements whose objectives, as will be discuss below, differed from their own? Not content with the opinions of their more moderate bedfellows, the IRB contributed to much of the agrarian violence that characterised the Land League and later the United Irish League and Sinn Féin. However, there has been

⁶⁴ Campbell, *Land and Revolution*, p.144.

⁶⁵ CO904/118, Reel 77, 'Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C', October 1909.

⁶⁶ CO904/118, Reel 77, 'Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C', March 1909; October 1909; December 1909; CO904/119, Reel 77, 'Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C', October 1911.

⁶⁷ CO904/119, Reel 77, 'Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C', December 1910.

⁶⁸ CO904/118, Reel 77, 'Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C', October 1909.

⁶⁹ CO904 /119, Reel 77, 'Précis of Information Received by the Special Branch R.I.C', December 1910.

⁷⁰ CO904/118, Reel 77, 'Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C', October 1909.

⁷¹ CO904/118, Reel 77, 'Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C', October 1909; CC, 2 May 1908.

some confusion as to why the IRB became involved in the agrarian agitation – something which was not sanctioned by the revolutionary organisation’s leadership as it was considered to have diverted adherents of the organisation away from its primary objective. This certainly was the view of later republican ‘purists’, such as Sean O’Keeffe of Crusheen, north Clare, who believed that IRB in this period ‘degenerated’ into unofficial circles solely concerned with land agitation.⁷² This allegation is by no means unfounded (since some IRB men did defect to the constitutional movement) – but neither is it surprising when such ambitious young men attempted to differentiate themselves from their elders by pursuing a different path.

There were many reasons why IRB members chose to become involved in agrarian agitation at this time. Some members of the rank and file believed that IRB political objectives could be ‘kept up’ through their involvement in agrarianism. This was something stressed by a Clare IRB man during the Land War, who urged the continuance of IRB involvement in the land agitation because it maintained the discipline and enthusiasm of the rank and file. He believed that the ‘men cannot be kept at their duty without [agrarian] outrages’.⁷³ Something similar was echoed by an IRB man thirty years afterwards when he was sworn into the Galway IRB in 1906, and stated that the movement’s involvement in the agrarian agitation ‘kept the spark of nationality alive in us’. He believed that ‘if the people were not fighting against the British forces proper, they were making a stand against its henchmen, the tyrant landlord class, their agents and bailiffs, who were backed up and protected by the Royal Irish constabulary’.⁷⁴ Members of the IRB also believed that violence and the commission of outrage was the only method through which to obtain land reform. These members believed that many of the concessions obtained since the Fenian movement in the 1860s, i.e. church disestablishment and the various land acts, could not have been obtained without the use of force.⁷⁵ Ultimately however, members of the IRB became involved in the agrarian issue because they believed that land ownership

⁷²Thomas Coffey, *Memoirs of Sean Barrett in the Parish of Inchicronan* (Whitegate, 1993) p. 217; IRA witness statements, Sean O’Keeffe, Ennis, Captain Crusheen Company Irish Volunteers, BMH. WS1261; See also Sean McNamara, Crusheen, Mid Clare Battalion, BMH.WS.1047; Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 115.

⁷³ *CJ*, 14 May 1883.

⁷⁴ Campbell, *Land and Revolution*, p.177.

⁷⁵ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, p. 2.

was a necessary precursor to political independence. It was generally perceived by many that the quest for land ownership and political independence went hand in hand.⁷⁶

The IRB's participation in the land agitation from the 1880s onwards was paralleled by its involvement in various social clubs and organisations. It appeared that for many IRB individuals, their object was to gain influence in as many organisations as possible. As the IRB's involvement in branches of the League increased, so too did its membership of charitable, literary and sporting organisations such as the Irish National Foresters, Young Ireland Society and the GAA. IRB involvement in political and cultural movements in the 1880s was not simply an example of 'people striving to find a place for themselves in the new dispensation' and their involvement in these movements were utilised to further the IRB organisations interests.⁷⁷ Through their dominance in various social clubs, the nature of these associations granted local leaders a convenient framework within which to advance the IRB's political objectives. These organisations acted as a 'cloak' through which the IRB could 'further secret society aims'.⁷⁸ Two branches of the Irish National Foresters ('a benefit society which provides for the relief of members and their wives in sickness, burial, insurance relief and maintenance of widows and orphans and overall circumstances of distress') existed in the western town of Kilrush and the principal town of Ennis in the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁹ While membership of the Foresters often fluctuated, in 1893 these branches had a total of eighty members, some of whom were also members of the IRB.⁸⁰ Since the proceedings of the society were often carried on behind closed doors and only briefly reported in the press, members could further their own objectives without incurring too much suspicion. Police reports noted that 'the Irish National Foresters, to a certain extent, being, a secret society, and conducting as it does, its meetings in private, offered a very tempting opening to the Fenians for the propagation of their designs'.⁸¹ Members utilised their positions and links within the association to carry out IRB

⁷⁶ CSORP.1882.19433; CSORP.1882. 20193

⁷⁷ R.V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society 1848-1882* (Dublin, 1985) pp 9, 249

⁷⁸ W. F Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish Nationalist Politics 1884-1924* (Dublin, 1987) p. 43.

⁷⁹ H.B.C. Pollard, *Secret Societies in Ireland: Their Rise and Progress* (London, 1922) p. 274.

⁸⁰ CBS, 501/S; CBS, 6247/S.

⁸¹ CO904/16, Reel 7, Register of Home Organisations, 'Memo: explanatory of the origin and political tendency of the Irish National Foresters Organisation'.

activity. The Head Centre of the IRB in Clare, Patrick McInerney (chairman of the Irish National Foresters, member of the GAA and Young Ireland Society and secretary to the Land League) utilised his influential position and involvement in social clubs to further IRB ends.⁸² Following his arrest for IRB-related activity in 1883, P. K. Sullivan (postmaster at Ennis Post Office) was prosecuted for assisting the organisation in the despatch of messages. Initially providing information to the constabulary as to McInerney's involvement in the IRB, on trial Sullivan later repudiated the sworn information, declaring that he was a good friend of McInerney and 'brother member' in the Irish National Foresters.⁸³ Thus, these social recreations were utilised by IRB men as a supplement for conspiracy.⁸⁴

The proceedings of these societies were utilised by IRB men to further radical nationalist ideas. The Young Ireland Society (a literary political organisation, which aimed to stimulate interest in Irish history and literature) offered a tempting framework through which IRB men could promote their beliefs. In Clare, most of these societies were dominated by the IRB. In the west of the county it was reported that two-thirds of the forty-five members of the Young Ireland Society in Miltown Malbay were IRB men, while in Ennis, the Young Ireland Society had forty-five members all of whom were believed to be 'under Fenian control'.⁸⁵ Kilrush had the largest branch of the Young Ireland Society, containing seventy-two members, all of whom were also believed to be 'under Fenian control' and its meetings were held weekly and well attended.⁸⁶ Because the society permitted a free and easy discussion between members on topics of nationalist interest, they were considered to be a 'convenient recruiting

⁸² *CJ*, 7 November 1899; *CI*, 21 February 1885.

⁸³ *CI*, 12 May 1883, 21 February 1885. The Irish National Foresters, similar to that of the Oddfellows was a friendly or "workers benefit" organisation run on non political lines. It was an initially established in England as the Ancient Order of Foresters. 'Its branches in Ireland were formed on same principle, but the members were not able to keep their organisation free from politics, and in the Fenian Amnesty movement, and in the later political questions, the Irish branches, as usual, threw in their lot with the nationalist party'. The governing body in England resented the introduction of the political element and severed its connection with the INF, an organisation which expanded considerably throughout England, Ireland and Scotland. The association in Ennis was established in 1872. CO904/16, Reel 7, Register of Home Organisations, 'Memo: explanatory of the origin and political tendency of the Irish National Foresters Organisation'; *CJ*, 4 December 1873, 9 December 1889.

⁸⁴ Brian Griffin, 'Social Aspects of Fenianism in Connacht and Leinster, 1858-1870, *Eire Ireland*, xxi, no. 2 (1986) p. 39; Daniel McCarthy, *Ireland's Banner County: Clare From the Fall of Parnell to the Great War 1890-1918* (Ennis, 2002) p. 61

⁸⁵ CO/903/5 p. 61; CBS 6186/S; CBS 501/S 1891.

⁸⁶ CBS 6186/S (1893); CBS 6247/S (1892).

ground' for the IRB 'to gain over young men to the physical force doctrines'.⁸⁷ As Kelly has shown, echoing the GAA and later the Gaelic League, the YIS combination of IRB organisation and an electric political atmosphere ensured that their literary and social activities were radically politicised.⁸⁸ Here groups discussed events of Irish history, from the ideas of the United Irishmen to the Fenians – all of which served to propagate and reinforce, through stories of Ireland's rebellious past and incidents and events of British misrule, a strong radical nationalist sentiment amongst those who attended.⁸⁹

The large number of IRB men within these organisations gave members an opportunity to exert their influence not only in the organisation, but within the local community. IRB individuals and the clergy competed for political control in local areas and societies and this was particularly apparent within the GAA. Part of the reason why IRB men competed for control of local clubs was because it gave them an opportunity to meet and freely discuss issues pertaining to the IRB organisation without suspicion or interruption. In Tulla, east Clare, it was believed that 'the numerous hurling matches now being organised in this district, are merely a cloak for illegal meetings' for the IRB 'where outrages are planned'.⁹⁰ One police report noted that in Clare, the matches were

Very largely attended by principal IRB and other suspects are present, who do not play, but form groups and consult and as all clubs play one another in turn, a good opportunity of general communication of all the leading conspirators in the county is afforded..... I am convinced that this organisation is very dangerous, and that its object is to enable leading members of the IRB to consult together without fear of a disturbance of the police.⁹¹

However, the real factor which influenced the campaign for control of GAA branches was the chance the association offered to exert an influence over the youth of a locality. Members of the clergy were apprehensive regarding the control the organisation exerted over young men and described the GAA as an attempt to 'range the young men of Ireland' under the leadership of P.N. Fitzgerald (provincial IRB organiser), and 'glorify in their eyes that particular form of patriotism of which he is one of the most

⁸⁷ CO904/16, Reel 7, Register of Home Organisations, 'Memo: explanatory of the origin and political tendency of the Young Ireland Society'.

⁸⁸ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, p. 23.

⁸⁹ For More on Young Ireland Society see, Chapter 6.

⁹⁰ CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, April 1889.

⁹¹ CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, March 1887.

distinguished types'.⁹² Despite the clergy's campaign to assume control of local branches, however, increased activity on the part of the IRB enabled the latter to gain control at the 1889 GAA convention, which they would never again relinquish.⁹³ By 1890, there were fifteen branches of the GAA in the county, thirteen of which were under Fenian and only two under clerical control.⁹⁴ Clerical influence in the association was considered to be 'almost nil' and in the counties of Kerry and Clare the IRB was considered to have 'supreme control'.⁹⁵ The IRB's position in these organisations allowed them to exert a strong influence in the local community. The police believed that the IRB harnessed militant nationalist enthusiasm at local matches. As well as the staging of flamboyant displays, young men who attended matches often 'march[ed] to and from the ground in military order'. Law enforcers considered such displays incriminatory; participants were 'as a rule disorderly and the attention of the people very defiant towards the police'.⁹⁶

With all this involvement in potentially rival groups, the IRB could be considered as 'opportunists'. For similar reasons, the IRB engaged in a murky relationship with parliamentarians from the 1880s onwards. In 1886, the Clare IRB engaged in an unusual alliance with the MP for West Clare, Captain William O'Shea. This IRB alliance with O'Shea was based on the IRB's and O'Shea's shared dislike of Parnell's control of the parliamentary party, but more so on that MP's record in campaigning for the release of Clare IRB suspects.⁹⁷ Following the imprisonment of a number of IRB suspects in Tulla, east Clare, in 1882, who were involved in promoting the no rent campaign, O'Shea campaigned vigorously for their release, including writing a number of letters to the Irish administration.⁹⁸ The following year he also facilitated the release of the Crusheen prisoners from north Clare, the Flanagan brothers from Clooney, East Clare, (April 1884) and was remembered for 'trying to save neck' of Francy Hynes,

⁹² *Celtic Times*, 26 November 1887; Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association*, p. 42.

⁹³ W.F. Mandle, 'The IRB and the Gaelic Athletics Association' in Alan O Day (ed.) *Reactions to Irish Nationalism, 1865-1914* (Dublin, 1987) p. 115

⁹⁴ CBS, 126/S; CBS 127/S.

⁹⁵ CO904/16, Reel 7, Register of Home Organisations, 'The Political Aspect of the GAA in Ireland'

⁹⁶ CBS, DCCI, Box Four, March 1887.

⁹⁷ *CI*, November 1884; Myles Dungan, *The Captain and the King* (Dublin, 2009) pp 236-238. During the commission O'Shea admitted he shared the IRB's dislike of the National League which they were both opposed to. *The Special Commission Act, 1888: Report of the Proceedings before the Commissioners appointed by the Act, Volume One* (London, 1890) p. 161.

⁹⁸ Captain O'Shea Papers, National Library of Ireland, ms 5752, Letter dated 23 June 1882; CSORP. 1882. 20799. For the arrest of these IRB suspects, see CSORP 1882.20193; CSORP. 1882. 19433.

from near Ennis, who was hanged in Limerick in 1884 for the murder of a herdsman James Doolaughy.⁹⁹ O'Shea openly courted the support of the Clare IRB on more than one occasion. He donated large sums of money to the 'Stephens Fund' which was launched in the county for the old Fenian after he was, in the words of Ennis nationalists, driven 'from his humble home in France at the request of the British government' for his supposed propagation of revolutionary designs.¹⁰⁰ He was also believed to have handed out money to numerous advanced nationalists, including Stephen McMahon and Michael O'Meara, of Kilrush, west Clare, both of whom were members of the IRB.¹⁰¹ For his actions in support of the Clare IRB prisoners O'Shea was widely revered by the organisation throughout the county. In Crusheen, North Clare, O'Shea was the obvious object of much admiration when principal IRB men staged a demonstration in his honour for his role in releasing the political prisoners in 1884.¹⁰²

O'Shea perhaps courted IRB support for a variety reasons: not simply because such men tended to yield much influence in their localities but also because many had become recently enfranchised since the passage of the Franchise Act in 1884. However, the alliance which occurred between the two appears to have been primarily based on shared negative views of Parnellism. According to O'Shea the IRB had always been the most 'strenuous opponents of Parnell's political party' because they disagreed with

⁹⁹ Doolaughy was a herd who was previously in the employment of Francis Hynes. When the Hynes family were evicted in 1880 their offer to re-purchase their holdings was superseded by John Lynch of Lissane Clarecastle. Lynch employed Doolaughy as herd on the farm. A boycott was issued against Lynch and Doolaughy, who continued to work for Lynch, incurred the animosity of the Land League as he was considered to be standing in the way of the local boycott. He became the object of agrarian attack, and was shot dead on 8 July 1882. However, to this day it is still disputed if Francis Hynes was really responsible for the agrarian murder. The nature of the evidence, the manner in which the trial had been conducted, and the behaviour of the jury raised questions about the genuineness of the prisoner's criminal convictions. As well as having a fairly airtight alibi, his conviction was mostly secured on the dying declaration of the herd Doolaughy (who was at the time unconscious and it is debatable, if the evidence was legitimate). Before the trial it was revealed that the jury stayed in a hotel in Dublin, where they were allowed to mingle before the trial (contrary to the rules that no jury members should discuss the case before the trial is in progress) and were believed to have been in a 'state of drunkenness'. Edmund Dwyer Grey, High Sheriff of Dublin, queried the almost entirely Protestant composition of the jury at the trial and was sentenced to three months in Richmond prison. For more information, Philomena Butler, 'Outrage at Drumdoolaghty: The Francie Hynes Affair', *The Other Clare*, 2006, pp 15-21; *CJ*, 30 April 1883, *CI*, 31 October 1885; *United Irishman*, 23, 30 September 1882; Cabinet Papers, National Archives Kew, CAB, 37/24.

¹⁰⁰ Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian Chief* (Dublin, 1967) pp 308, 309, 310, 312, 314; *CI*, 31 October 1885. For Clare response see, *CI*, 11, 25 April, 23, 30 May, 15 August, 5 September 1885.

¹⁰¹ *CI*, 31 October 1885.

¹⁰² *CI*, 25 October 1884.

constitutional agitation. The IRB were ideologically opposed to constitutional action as they were ‘men who considered they could fight their country’s battle on the hill side against the British forces’.¹⁰³ At the same time Captain O’Shea was having his own problems with Parnell, who, much to O’Shea’s exasperation, showed a reluctance to consider him as candidate for the upcoming 1886 election.¹⁰⁴ United by their shared mistrust of Parnell, the IRB and O’Shea engaged in a murky alliance which involved Bryan Clune, county centre of the IRB from Clooney, near Ennis, running as MP for Galway. Before Parnell approved of O’Shea’s candidature, it was intended that Clune would contest the Galway seat in 1886, with the intention of withdrawing in O’Shea’s interest. A letter to the Captain from ‘a Fenian chief’ in 1886 assured him that

If Bryan Clune stands for Galway it will be pretty hard to beat him, and if at that last moment he yields to the request of his Clare friends and retires in favour of any person, that person will be rather safe. ...When the friends were in trouble you gave them a helping hand, and they don’t forget it. We stand to the man that stood to a friend and a friend’s friend. God Save Ireland!¹⁰⁵

Although the idea that the IRB could make an alliance with such a politically conservative MP is questionable, the incident revealed the lengths to which the IRB were prepared to go to in order to secure political influence, and discredit Parnell’s political party. This was something which the IRB again attempted to do when Bryan Clune was put forward for election for East Clare in 1885 (alongside P.N. Fitzgerald) and again in 1886.¹⁰⁶ In both instances Clune was nominated by local IRB men to stand against the Parnellite favoured candidate J. R. Cox, earning him the censure of one influential Parnellite supporter, Fr. M.B. Curry of Quin, near Ennis, who considered his nomination to be an attempt to destroy Parnell’s political movement.¹⁰⁷ While Clune decided not to contest this election, he nonetheless had ‘a strong party at his back’ and

¹⁰³ *CJ*, 1 November 1888; *The Special Commission Act, 1888: Report of the Proceedings before the Commissioners appointed by the Act, Volume One* (London, 1890) p. 161.

¹⁰⁴ Captain O’Shea Papers, ms 5752, Letter dated 2 November 1885, Melbourne Hotel Dublin. Despite the fact that he refused to take the party pledge O’Shea was adamant that he should secure a seat in the next election. In a letter to Parnell O’Shea he stated that; ‘several important personages have had the opportunity of appreciating what I have done for you and are of the opinion that, as a gentleman, you are under the dearest obligation to declare to your friends that you insist on my being returned to parliament *quand meme* [anyway], and that if the necessary steps are not taken for this purpose you will resign the leadership of your party’.

¹⁰⁵ Kathrine O’Shea, *Charles Stewart Parnell : His Love Story and Political Life* (London, 1914) Volume 2, p. 215

¹⁰⁶ *MN*, 7, 14, 21, July, 7, 11, 25, August, 1, 8, September, 24 November 1886; *CI*, 17 October 1885; CO904/17, Reel 7, ‘Register of Suspects A-F’, Bryan Clune.

¹⁰⁷ *MN*, 14, 21, July, 7, 11, 25, August, 1, 8 September 1886.

sometime afterwards the cleric was forced to relinquish his control of the political platform at a Home Rule meeting which he attended in Tulla, east Clare.¹⁰⁸ These links between IRB and constitutional activity reveal that physical force separatism in Clare, was much stronger than heretofore supposed, and the extent to which it had a common discourse with constitutionalism was particularly evident from 1891 onwards.¹⁰⁹

When the Parnellite split occurred in 1891, members of the IRB who were once ‘strenuous opponents’ of Parnell’s political party now pledged themselves to support him. This was because at this time Parnellism tended to share the same ideals as the IRB (anti-clericalism and anti-Englishness), and opportunist IRB members (in a move reminiscent of the New Departure of 1879) allied themselves with the Parnellite faction in 1890 because it fitted in with their already existing set of views. The Parnellite faction was anti-clerical; it was also anti-English (since Parnell was seen as having been ‘betrayed’ by an English Minister), while Parnell’s rhetoric on ‘independent opposition’ and withdrawal from Westminster fitted in nicely with the IRB policy on the futility of parliamentary representation at Westminster. In addition to this, Parnellism, through its apparent sanction of physical force, appeared to share the same outlook as the IRB and many believed (or at least, wanted to believe) Parnell’s addresses to the ‘hillside men’ which alluded to the need for revolutionary alternatives should constitutional agitation fail.¹¹⁰ This was, after all, the belief of P. N. Fitzgerald, organiser for Clare, and was more than once hinted at by IRB orators on the local political platforms.¹¹¹ James Halpin, old Fenian, speaking to William Redmond, MP in East Clare in 1898 stated

That if Parnell failed by constitutional means to right the wrongs of Ireland he would resort to the sword to accomplish his purpose (hear, hear). Mr Parnell had made the statement to him while they were on their way to a meeting in Miltown Malbay, which showed that although he was a constitutional man he was also a physical force man (cheers).¹¹²

Following the events of October 1890, the majority of the IRB in Clare gave their support to the Parnellite faction. Parnell’s last demonstration in Ennis in 1891 – at which he received an enthusiastic reception from an estimated twelve thousand people –

¹⁰⁸ CO904/17, Reel 7, ‘Register of Suspects A-F’, Bryan Clune; *MN*, 24 November 1886.

¹⁰⁹ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999) p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Comerford, *The Fenians in Context*, p. 225

¹¹¹ CBS, 11526/S.

¹¹² *LL*, 28 November 1898. (Redmond, perhaps not so revealingly, did not respond to Halpin’s comment).

obtained the support of the IRB who were present on the political platforms. That the radical element in Clare had sided with the Parnellite side was apparent: speeches were delivered lauding the ‘brave and bold Fenian’ and banners which decorated the streets featured slogans such as ‘A Cheer for the Hill Side Men’.¹¹³ Following the news of Parnell’s death some months later, principal IRB men again led violent crowds at demonstrations in Ennis. At the staging of a demonstration by the anti-Parnellite Irish National Federation, Parnellite crowds under the leadership of Bryan Clune (Centre of the Clare IRB) followed the federation supporters through the principal streets of the town where they succeeded in preventing an anti-Parnellite meeting from being staged. At street corners and on the main streets, violent hand to hand conflicts broke out between rival factions; clergymen, delegates and their adherents were attacked and injured by Parnellite crowds wielding stones, bottles, hurleys and blackthorns.¹¹⁴ The militant imagery associated with the IRB was conspicuous: according to one observer, men marched in military order wielding camans responding to the ‘military phrase’, ‘Hurleys to the front’.¹¹⁵

Constitutional nationalists sought to appeal to this militant element again and again following the split in the early 1890s. Through his use of militant rhetoric, William Redmond succeeded in engaging the support of the IRB faction in Clare for his candidature in the 1892 parliamentary election – which was first put forward by the staunchly Parnellite and IRB dominated Young Ireland Society at an early convention held in Ennis.¹¹⁶ Organisations such as the GAA, Irish National Foresters and Young Ireland Society became platforms through which the organisation could further the interests of the Parnellites and launch abuse against those whom they called ‘factionists’, in particular, the clergy.¹¹⁷ In 1892, the IRB, through the Young Ireland Society, were active in support of Redmond’s candidature in East Clare, where ‘blood

¹¹³ *CJ*, 2 February 1891.

¹¹⁴ *CJ*, 17 December 1891.

¹¹⁵ *CJ*, 14 January 1892.

¹¹⁶ *Irish Daily Independent*, 21 May 1892; CBS, 1892, 6186/S; In Limerick, Redmond and co were afterwards welcomed by a IRB delegation consisting of Daniel Madigan, Thomas O’Gorman, J Jones (afterwards deceased), John Crowe, and J Gaffney where speeches were also made in favour of Amnesty, the dynamiter John Daly then in prison

¹¹⁷ *CJ*, 2 February, 15 October 1891, 11 January, 28 July, 3, 6 October 1892. Father Gilligan, Labasheeda, accused some of the members of the Ennis YIS for being behind the demonstration of November 15 1891 – where members of the clergy were attacked. In support of the Parnellite faction, the Kilrush YIS society was also at this time locked in political conflict with the local cleric Father Scanlon.

was shed like water' with violence having apparently escalated to such an extent that it was alleged that revolvers were distributed amongst the Parnellites.¹¹⁸ Again, during the 1895 election, popular IRB figures appealed to the physical force faction to whip up support for the Parnellite candidates in East and West Clare, William Redmond and Rochford Maguire. In this capacity as old 'Fenian chief', James Stephens despatched a telegram which was printed on placards and distributed widely throughout East and West Clare. To the local IRB Stephens declared: 'If our principles are alive in Clare, and I know they are, my advocacy of your paramount claims to represent it will not be made in vain'.¹¹⁹ The parliamentary candidate's alliance with James Stephens was utilised to obtain the advanced nationalist vote. While Stephens had become a strong supporter of Parnell following his death in 1891, Redmond's alleged recent construction of a house for Stephens in Dublin must have by no means discouraged the old Fenians support for the Parnellite candidates.¹²⁰ In west Clare voters were told that 'the old Fenian leader recommends them to take Mr Rochford Maguire'.¹²¹ In the western coastal town of Lahinch, they commented that the candidature of Maguire had the 'great and special advantage of receiving the good word of James Stephens, whose name was revered and honoured through Clare'.¹²²

The Redmondites' appeal to the heroes of the separatist pantheon, chimed with the popular idea of the cultural revival as propagated by movements such as the Young Ireland Society and the Gaelic League.¹²³ This revival, with its focus on encouraging a renewed interest in Irish history, literature and language, succeeded in bringing the IRB to greater prominence in the county in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. But before the IRB could claim, as representatives of Ireland's insurrectionary past, historical authority within the cultural revival, a split occurred which was based on these very precepts of these cultural and literary organisations.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ *CJ*, 5, 8 December 1892. This does not seem at all far-fetched considering that when Redmond entered the town of Scariff 'shots were fired all along the way' to intimidate rival factions.

¹¹⁹ *LL*, 22 July 1895.

¹²⁰ Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian Chief*, p. 332; *Irish Daily Independent*, 13 May 1892.

¹²¹ *LL*, 24 July 1895

¹²² *LL*, 24 July 1895.

¹²³ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, p. 98.

¹²⁴ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, p. 107.

In the 1890s this split in the IRB in Ireland was based on a conflict which already existed within the American sister organisation, the Clan na nGael. In 1889 this conflict led to the formation of two wings of republican factionists, the United Brotherhood led by John Devoy and the Irish National Brotherhood led by Alexander O’Sullivan. The tension between the two American branches was accentuated in 1894 with O’Sullivan’s protégée, William Lyman, establishing the Irish National Alliance (hereafter INA) - run on similar lines to the old Irish National Brotherhood.¹²⁵ This factionism spread to Ireland in 1895 – with the formation of a branch of the INA movement, whose members had recently seceded from the IRB. The INA party was partly an attempt to ‘conceive of Fenianism more in line with literary thinking’ – it was reported in 1895 that ideologically the INA differed from the IRB because it did ‘not appear to favour outrage’ and its aims closely imitated those of existing literary and cultural organisations.¹²⁶

In Clare the INA faction was particularly strong within a number of nationalist associations (both cultural and political) such as the Young Ireland Society, Amnesty Association, and also within branches of the ’98 Clubs (committees established to commemorate the centenary of the 1798 rebellion). Here in this local context, it reflected the conflicts that were occurring nationally between the IRB and emerging INA faction, whose members were disillusioned with the leadership and methods adopted by the IRB organisation since its alliance with the parliamentary party in the 1890s. In the Clare context, however, the split seems to have been more about personalities and local leaders than about any real political or ideological dispute between the two organisations.

The emergence of INA and IRB factions in Clare was mostly due to the exertions of both American and provincial organisers. Here, personalities competed for control – visiting the county throughout the period 1894 to 1897 in an attempt to sway the old heads of the organisation into joining the new movement. Though the split did not

¹²⁵ The movement contained a pledge, and branches in Ireland and England were sent to be affiliated with American branches. McGee, *The IRB*, pp 241, 238.

¹²⁶ Although associated with the dynamite campaign in America, the INA’s object in Dublin was to achieve the independence of Ireland and foster national feeling amongst all classes of Irishmen. Precepts of the literary revival formed the INA’s core values, i.e. organisation devoted itself to the study of Irish history, Irish language etc. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, pp 99, 102, 107. Leon O Broin, *Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976) p. 65.

occur until the mid 1890s, the potential for disagreement was already evident in 1891 with organisers of the INA and IRB from the United States, London, Dublin and Munster, visiting the county in an attempt to use their personal influence to encourage the formation of rival Fenian factions. During the period 1891-1892, the American representative of the INA, William Lyman, had appeared in the Western Division where he, along with Captain George Sweeny, visited several localities in August and had interviews with leading IRB men.¹²⁷ Lyman continued to maintain links with the county and in 1894 a delegate to Clare (Colonel Arthur Lynch) who visited old IRB men and heads of the movement in Kilkee and Kilrush, west Clare, and in the principal town of Ennis, told Patrick McInerney, County Centre, that Lynam was again to return to the country from America in about six weeks 'to assist the movement'. In view of this he told the county centre to 'organise very soon' and that he would 'probably be called on to go to Dublin or London in connection with the movement.'¹²⁸

The IRB in Clare was continuously informed of these events and in December 1894, the leader of the INA faction, Dr Mark Ryan, then resident in London, made an attempt to introduce the INA into Clare. He visited the western town of Kilrush and later Ennis where he met with Jerry Ahern, a publican from the town.¹²⁹ The spread of the movement was also facilitated by locally known individuals in Limerick.¹³⁰ Since 1895 the Limerick branch of the Amnesty Association was controlled by the INA, which was gaining ground in the city and spreading to parts of Clare.¹³¹ The following year moves were being implemented to establish the INA subject to the control of the Limerick branch and Ennis was declared to be one of the first places to be visited.¹³² It also spread to Kilrush, where in August 1896 a branch of the Amnesty Association was

¹²⁷ CBS 6186/S; McGee, *The IRB*, p. 219.

¹²⁸ CBS, 1894, 27098/S; Sheedy, *Clare Elections*, p. 313. Colonel Arthur Lynch, old Fenian, fought for the Irish Brigade in the Boers, had extensive Fenian connections in Galway and Clare, however, his political opinions became somewhat subdued when he converted to parliamentarianism and was elected MP for Galway in 1901. He was later elected MP for west Clare in the 1909. CO904/17, Reel 7, 'Register of Suspects I-J, Arthur Lynch.

¹²⁹ CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 22 December 1894, 9424/S.

¹³⁰ Members of the Amnesty Association and INA faction in Limerick in 1897 included, P O' Reilly (miller), J Molony, (clerk), J McKnight, (carpenter), M Bourke (fitter), C Ryan, (clerk). These men visited the recently formed Kilrush Amnesty Association in August 1896. *LL*, 14, 19 August 1896; CO903, 6, p. 29-32.

¹³¹ Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 73; CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 12 August 1896, 12312/S.

¹³² CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 1 June 1896, 11952/S.

formed as the result of the visit of a number of suspected INA sympathisers from Limerick.¹³³

Personalities and local organisers played a key part in facilitating the spread of the new organisation in the county. Disputes which occurred between these personalities were also a factor in why some members of the IRB defected to the INA. For example in Kilrush, a dispute was ongoing between John O'Dwyer, who had recently defected to the INA, and Luke O'Brien of the IRB. While the dispute which existed between the two men was perhaps motivated by their differing political ideologies, as members of the IRB and INA, there was also an ongoing dispute between the two that probably informed their choice of factions.¹³⁴ Both O'Dwyer and O'Brien were at odds with each other politically and often clashed within the Town Commissioners.¹³⁵ In 1898, this rivalry seeped into the local '98 branch where both were at odds with each other over control of the local committee.¹³⁶ Both men were also competitors in trade, since both O'Brien and O'Dwyer owned public houses in the Market Square, in the centre of the town. Their choice of opposing factions was probably as much to do with personal political rivalries and economic competition as with competing ideologies. Such personal disputes between factionists were not confined to the local area, but also existed at provincial level, between IRB organiser for Munster, Patrick Neville Fitzgerald, and P. J. Hoctor of the INA. In 1895, it was reported that Fitzgerald was 'no longer on good terms with Hoctor, the INA and many Cork IRB men, on account of 'his alleged misappropriation of Fenian funds'.¹³⁷ This economic dispute between the rank-and-file was perhaps a factor in aggravating the split, which in Clare, witnessed both Hoctor and Fitzgerald vying for control of local centres. This tension was apparent especially in East Clare, where in 1895, Fitzgerald met Fenian leaders in the districts of Scariff, Feakle, Bodyke and Killaloe and in response to Fitzgerald's territorial claims, P. J. Hoctor, followed the latter's wake going over the same ground.¹³⁸

¹³³ CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 12 August 1896, 12312/S, *LL*, 19 August 1896; CO903, 6, pp 29-32

¹³⁴ *LL*, 19 August 1896; CO903, 6, pp 29-32; CBS, 15200/S.

¹³⁵ *LL*, 18 June 1897, 28 February, 3 August 1898.

¹³⁶ *LL*, 18 June 1897, 22 August, 2 September 1898, 26 October, 9, 17 November, 5 December 1898. O'Brien was later pushed out of the Manchester Martyrs Club.

¹³⁷ CO904/17, Reel 7, 'Register of Suspects A-F', Patrick Neville Fitzgerald.

¹³⁸ CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 9 January 1896, 11170-S.

The Clare IRB's reaction to the split of 1895 was mixed but most members seem to have been hostile to the new movement.¹³⁹ From police reports it appears that the INA mostly took off in the western part of the county.¹⁴⁰ In Kilrush, factions of the INA were apparent in the '98 committees and Amnesty association, while in Miltown Malbay, splinters of the INA existed in the branch of the Young Ireland Society which fell apart due to dissension between the rival factions in 1895.¹⁴¹ Although the INA generally tended to recruit new members from the ranks of the IRB, areas that had no connection with IRB activity were becoming mobilised in support of the INA. In the west, the INA appeared to be particularly prominent in areas recently 'opened up' with the growth in rail transport. Whether this impression is due to the scantiness of the historical record (considering that very little police or newspaper correspondence emanated from this area), it appears that in remote western villages, heretofore with no pre-existing republican links, such as in Lisdoonvarna, Coore and Cree, there emerged new leaders who pledged themselves in support of the INA.¹⁴² These villages were situated along the coast stretching from the north-west to south-west of the county and some of which were only recently accessible *via* the west Clare railway. It was reported that on behalf of the INA, Hoctor periodically met individual 'head centres' along these north western and south western districts, from Kilkee, Kilmurry-Ibrickane, Kilrush, Lahinch, Miltown Malbay and Cooraclare. That this was perhaps a new development was evident in the authorities' response to the news of clandestine activity in these regions. With a mixture of surprise and alarm they commented that the region had, 'a remarkable number of head centres for one corner of Clare'.¹⁴³

In the principal town of Ennis, there were believed to be over two hundred supporters of the movement, though most accounts predicting the growth of the INA seem to have been exaggerated.¹⁴⁴ This was partly because such reports came from the Limerick branch of INA, which could have been overstating membership of the new organisation in an attempt to lower IRB morale and recruit new members. From the hostility shown

¹³⁹ Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 68.

¹⁴⁰ CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 19 December 1896, 1294/S.

¹⁴¹ In Miltown Malbay the IRB were also suffering from a loss of direction: The YIS collapsed and there was fighting in the public streets CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 21 May 1896, 11913/S.

¹⁴² See, CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 15 November 1897, 14700-S, Carton Two, January 1898 15143/S.

¹⁴³ PIRSS, Carton One: 15 November 1897, 14700/S, Carton Two, January 1898 15143/S.

¹⁴⁴ CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 1 June 1896, 11952/S

by the IRB men to the new movement in Ennis, it appears that INA was quite unpopular and the new movement does not appear to have been taken up by members there. In fact there are no examples of INA members participating in any of the cultural organisations in the town, areas in which many IRB and INA men elsewhere competed for control. Compared to the town of Kilrush, no INA men appeared in the '98 committee or in the branch of Amnesty Association in Ennis.¹⁴⁵

The split which began in 1895 seemed to reaffirm the strong position of the IRB in the county. The hostile reception given to the INA exposed the deep seated and communal loyalties that underpinned the IRB locally and even in west Clare, where, as already discussed, the INA made considerable headway, support for the INA was equivocal, with members recognising its authority but still pledging themselves to the leadership of IRB man Fredrick James Allan.¹⁴⁶ It was apparent that personal ties and old political loyalties informed the attitude of many members during the dispute. It was stated that the leading IRB men in the south of Ireland were opposed to the new movement – and it appears that for the most part the old heads of the organisation in Clare were rooted in the old IRB tradition.¹⁴⁷ Such individuals perceived themselves to be a more extreme class of men than those involved in the INA movement. This was particularly evident when Dr. Mark Ryan of London visited Ennis in 1894, where IRB men evinced great hostility towards the idea of 'being governed by men in England'.¹⁴⁸ An issue which particularly aggravated these tensions was the INA's replacement of the IRB oath of allegiance (which offered the movement a degree of secrecy) with a pledge. The use of the pledge earned the disapproval of many clandestine IRB men such as P. N Fitzgerald who, in conversation with Michael Hogan (a shoemaker, publican, and shopkeeper) of Gorteeny, a townland on the border of east Clare and Galway, said the INA was a good

¹⁴⁵ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, p.104; T.J. O'Keefe, 'The 1898 Efforts to celebrate the United Irishmen: The '98 Centennial', *Eire – Ireland*, 23 (1988) pp 51-173; CBS, 15200/S.

¹⁴⁶ Divisional commissioner Cork, reports that the IRB in west Clare is being reorganised by John Barry (farmers son), Dr Martin Flynn and James Daly (farmer/publican) of Miltown Malbay and Michael Carey (tailor) of Kilrush, who while professing to be followers of PJ Hoctor and the INA, are said to take guidance of FJ Allen of Dublin, the representative of the Cronin wing of the Clan na nGael. Under secretary Dublin castle, observes the inconsistency, and Major Gosselin suggests that it may be due to Allen issuing instructions to all the leading secret society men in Ireland pending a final split. CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 5 February 1896, 11332/S.

¹⁴⁷ CBS, 1896, 11526/S.

¹⁴⁸ CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 22 December 1894, 9424/S.

movement in many respects, but not sufficiently secret to be of any real service.¹⁴⁹ Speaking to a circle of the IRB in Woodford, Galway, P. N. Fitzgerald advised them to ‘stick to the old organisation...to the secret and therefore the best movement’.¹⁵⁰

The rift which developed within the IRB locally exposed a movement that was shaken by individuals interested mainly in pursuing personal squabbles and satisfying private spleens. However, the events surrounding the dispute also revealed that the Clare IRB had a loyal membership who had developed extensive links with, and were closely informed upon, the activities of sister branches at home and abroad. In comparison to the parliamentary party, the split which occurred within in the IRB did not lead to the complete demoralisation of, or disillusionment with, the movement amongst its sympathisers. Instead the incident served to affirm the stubborn yet solid support that existed for the IRB organisation in the county. Far from being a movement which ‘degenerated’ into political infighting and personal squabbling in this period, the IRB movement was reinforced and mobilised by sympathisers of the organisation abroad. According to police reports, the main reason why attempts to introduce the INA in the county were unsuccessful was due to the activities and exertions of centres and leaders of the IRB movement in America – men who were perhaps members of the Clan Na nGael. During the split between the IRB and INA faction in the later 1890s in Clare, the organisation increasingly coordinated with members of the organisation abroad. It was reported that the IRB in Clare was ‘under the control of Head Centres in America’ who were ‘determined not to become subordinated to the INA’.¹⁵¹ To facilitate the collection of funds for the Clare organisation, estimates of the numerical strength of the IRB in the county were forwarded to three men based in Chicago in 1896 (although it is unknown who these men were).¹⁵² Following the unification of the two wings at a meeting of Munster IRB delegates in Limerick in 1899, the Clan helped sustain the revolutionary movement in Ireland. During the years 1900-1905, provincial organisers in Clare kept members informed of the running of the Clan na Gael in the U.S and frequently updated

¹⁴⁹CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, 21 May 1896, 11613/S.

¹⁵⁰CBS, 1896, 11526/S.

¹⁵¹CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, March 1897.

¹⁵²Divisional commander of Cork reports that according to informant, a return showing the strength of the IRB in Clare was forwarded to Chicago about six months ago, presumably for information of the three men there who are collecting funds for the IRB. CBS, PIRSS, Carton One, February 1897, 13182/S.

them on the activities of their ‘American friends’ who supplied them with arms.¹⁵³ These links with the American branch of the Clan na Gael were re-established in 1907 by the Clare branch of Sinn Féin which succeeded in purchasing arms from America.¹⁵⁴

When advanced nationalist activity re-emerged following the unification of the IRB and INA, there was an automatic recourse to the IRB.¹⁵⁵ Encouraged by the greater links with America and stirred up by Boer successes, more and more young people were joining the IRB, as organisers and agents were given the task of encouraging the re-organisation of the movement at home.¹⁵⁶ The IRB, through its involvement in the cultural movements of the late nineteenth century sought to encourage a renewed interest in the physical force tradition. Despite the views of opposing political groups, through the celebration of the ’98 centenary and through their involvement in branches of the Gaelic League, the IRB claimed much of the historical legacy accrued by the individuals of Ireland’s rebellious past, by placing their tradition within a long history of periodic struggle against British misrule.¹⁵⁷ Through their involvement in cultural nationalist organisations such as the Gaelic League and ’98 Clubs these members sought, in particular, to impart in the younger generation a reverence and respect for what they saw as their insurrectionary heritage. According to the authorities, the IRB’s policy was not aimed at insurrection – but at infiltrating these organisations ‘for the

¹⁵³ The main Clare delegate present at this meeting was Thomas Madigan, barber, from Arthur’s Row, Ennis. CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 24 August 1889, 19842/S; 28 July 1899, 19740/S. It was reported that P.N. Fitzgerald visited Ennis 9 times between 30 May 1900 and 14 June 1904 in his role as provincial organiser of the IRB. Of special note during this time was his multiple visits to PJ Linnane, Chairman of the Urban Council and magistrate for the county Clare, whom he informed on IRB business. CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three: PIRSS, 15 June 1900, 22189/S; 7 September 1901, 25603/S; 17 February 1902, 26398/S; 4 March 1902, 26464/S; 5 November 1902, 27881/S. During these visits, Fitzgerald kept Clare IRB members informed on American affairs. In a visit to Ennis on the 15 June 1903, he told local suspects ‘there are delegates from America to come to Ireland this year, perhaps before the summer is out, and no doubt America means business’. On another trip to the town on the 22 April 1904, he stated that ‘affairs are going on fairly well in many counties, that England and Scotland are going on well and that the American brotherhood was working well and very active with the expectation that there will be a European War over the present crisis in the east and that England cannot keep out of it’. CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 7 July 1903, 28765/S, 30 November 1903, 29218/S, 14 June 1904, 29621/S; 12 April 1904, 29702/S; 1 March 1904, 29473/S; 31 July 1903, 28885/S. Alan J. Ward, ‘America and the Irish problem’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 1968, p. 68.

¹⁵⁴ CO904/118, Reel 77, ‘Précis of information received by the Special Branch R.I.C’, October 1909; December 1909.

¹⁵⁵ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, p. 108.

¹⁵⁶ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 22 October 1899, 20270/S; 1899, 2089/S, Carton Three, 6 January 1900, 20912/S; 5 March 1900, 21361/S; 6 April 1900, 21614/S; CO904/70, Reel 36, ‘RIC Inspector General’s and County Inspectors monthly reports’, February 1900; *LL*, 14 Feb 1900.

¹⁵⁷ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, p. 108.

purpose of arousing ultra nationalist sentiment, ‘calculated to educate young people in the spirit of active hostility to England’.¹⁵⁸ These views shaped the mindset of the young men and women who attended committees and demonstrations staged by the various cultural movements throughout Clare in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The Gaelic League, one such movement, through its focus on the revival of the Irish language, was (from outside appearances at least) a non-political organisation that attracted a range of members from differing social groupings and political affiliations. But throughout the early decades of the twentieth century the Gaelic League became increasingly partisan in political terms. Contrary to Fitzpatrick’s thesis the Fenian tradition was very much alive in Clare, especially within in the Gaelic League, which played a part in influencing revolutionary sentiment in the post-independence period.¹⁵⁹ Through its assertion of a distinct Irish identity it became increasingly used by advanced nationalists as a medium through which an independent Irish nationality could be asserted and instilled amongst the younger generation. While the clergy maintained control of sixty-six per cent of the membership until 1901, this trend changed at the end of the year, with special constables reporting that ‘the priests are not supporting the [Gaelic] League in Clare, as it has fallen into the hands of the physical force party’. From this period onwards, IRB individuals came to dominate local branches of the Gaelic League, members in branches such as Ennis being considered to be a ‘dangerous class of men, whose endeavour is to inculcate an extreme hatred of England and everything British’.¹⁶⁰ Such members sought to assert, through their teaching of the Irish language and partisan history, the idea of separatist nationalism, something clearly expressed in pro-Boer pamphlets circulated in the county in 1900:

Strong measures must at once be initiated to educate the young men of Ireland in the true national spirit...with a proper knowledge of our own sweet melodious tongue, a devoted interest in Ireland’s past, and a bright hope for the

¹⁵⁸ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 16 July 1900, 22369/S.

¹⁵⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp 135, 134.

¹⁶⁰ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 14 October 1901, 25520/S, 19 August 1902, 27596/S; CBS, 26298/S. In Clare, the clergy had maintained control of the League until 1901, with ten branches in existence and of a total membership of 403 in Clare. Of this 268 were under clerical control and 135 were under Fenian control.

future, accompanied by timely effort, the cause of our dear land shall be as living as it was in the days of Owen Roe, Red Hugh or Brian.¹⁶¹

These ideals were also encouraged by Leaguers within the national school system. Presiding at a meeting of the INTO in Dublin, Tomas Hayes, N.T. encouraged the teaching of the Irish language alongside Irish History in primary schools.¹⁶² He believed that this would not be without its effects in stirring nationalist sentiment – it would, he argued, teach the young that although they had a past that was ‘tear stained and bloodshed’ it was something to ‘be ‘proud of’.¹⁶³ A native of Miltown Malbay, Hayes often attended local meetings of the League in his capacity as Gaelic League organiser where he had a profound influence in shaping the character of the language movement both locally and nationally.¹⁶⁴ Like some other individuals within the Gaelic League, Hayes was believed to be ‘an active Fenian organiser’, and his association with the IRB must have impacted the type of political opinion which was becoming increasingly instilled at local branches. Police believed that in Clare, the Gaelic League was gradually becoming a ‘school for the teaching of Fenianism and a hatred of the British government’.¹⁶⁵

IRB men were also involved in instilling these ideas through their role in the celebration of the 1798 centenary. The event witnessed the formation of ’98 clubs which were involved in the staging of public demonstrations and (in the case of Kilrush, Killaloe and Quin) the erection of patriotic monuments which commemorated Ireland’s revolutionary heritage. Ten branches of the ’98 Club were in existence in the county in 1898, and although the evidence is scanty, at least half were under the control of the IRB while the remainder consisted of a combined IRB, clerical and constitutionalist

¹⁶¹ C.S.O.R.P, 1900. 15483.

¹⁶² Thomas Hayes, was president of Saint Gabriel’s, Aughrim Street, member of the executive committee of the INTO and was president of the Keating branch of the Gaelic League in Dublin- whose members included Maude Gonne and Arthur Griffith.

¹⁶³ CC, 2 March 1907.

¹⁶⁴ Diarmuid Breathnach and Máire Ni Murchu, ‘Thomas Hayes of Miltown Malbay’, *Dal gCais*, 10 (1991) pp 72 -78. As member of the Keating branch of the Gaelic League in Dublin, Hayes, published a number of songs, plays and ballads, some of which featured his hometown, ‘Farewell to Miltown Malbay’, and ‘Hills of Clare’; others gained prominence nationally, such as the Gaelic League play ‘Sean an Scuab’. He was also responsible for introducing the first wall map of Ireland in Irish in the school system.

¹⁶⁵ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 2 January 1902, 26084/S.

presence.¹⁶⁶ In Killaloe and Kilrush in particular (though why is unclear) IRB men dominated local committees where they – through the erection of monuments in memory of 1798 and 1867 - sought to instil radical nationalist ideas through a glorification of popular Irish rebels from Wolfe Tone to the Manchester Martyrs.¹⁶⁷

Through their involvement in these associations, the IRB propagated nationalist ideas that were increasingly shared by a broad spectrum of the population. Their survival influenced the forms used by the later generation, and writings by and songs and stories about the ‘bold Fenian men’ contributed richly to the new nationalist rhetoric.¹⁶⁸ Schools and branches of the Gaelic League encouraged the teaching of rebel songs and patriotic plays – something which members acknowledged was not permitted (either through the opposition of government or moderate nationalists) in the county a few years previous.¹⁶⁹ In both primary schools and at branches of the League in the east and west of the county, young children were taught in Irish the words to already well-known songs such as ‘The Wearing of the Green’, ‘In Memory of the Dead’, ‘A Nation Once Again’ ‘Fontenoy’ and the ‘Stars and Stripes’, all of which commemorated rebellion and celebrated resistance.¹⁷⁰ The main speech of the local priest Rev. P. Clancy, at the laying of the foundation stone for the Manchester Martyr monument in Kilrush, was indicative of the changes that had occurred in popular nationalism in Clare. Fr. Clancy argued that support for Ireland’s insurrectionary past was no longer the preserve of ‘extreme men’:

I maintain that they memory of Allen Larkin and O’Brien, as of Emmet, Wolfe Tone, John Mitchell, or Charles Kickham (applause) is the heritage of every man who has a heart to feel, or a mind to plan, or an arm to strike for Ireland (applause).¹⁷¹

Support for the physical force tradition, far from being the reserve of a ‘small committed and faithful few’, now through the efforts of the Gaelic League and ’98

¹⁶⁶ Newspaper and Police reports list ten branches of the ’98 Committee in the county. These were, Kilrush, Killaloe, Clooney-Quin, Ennis, Kilmaley, Scariff, Carron, Killaloe, Ennistymon and Lahinch. CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 22 January 1898, 15274/S, 7 March 1898, 15628/S, 24 March 1898, 15983/S. *LL*, 1 November 1897, 26 January, 18, 21 February, 22 July 1898; *Saturday Record* (cited hereafter as *SR*), 5, 9, February 1898; *CJ*, 21, 24 March, 12, 26 May, 16, 20, 23 June 1898.

¹⁶⁷ CBS, 15200/S; *LL*, 14 January, 24, 27, 29 June, 12 August 1898.

¹⁶⁸ Comerford, *The Fenians in Context*, p. 249.

¹⁶⁹ *CC*, 2 March 1907.

¹⁷⁰ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 10 February 1902, 26355/S; *United Irishman*, 8 April 1905.

¹⁷¹ *CC*, 5 September 1903

Clubs came to be (in the somewhat exaggerated assessment of one local priest) the heritage of every man'. Those who were particularly influenced by the spread of this new cultural nationalism were, in fact, the rising generation of young men and women.¹⁷² This emergence of a younger generation of nationalist enthusiasts was obvious in the '98 centenary celebrations. While older '67 veterans were prominent on the main platform at the Kilrush Manchester Martyrs demonstration, younger men were also given special prominence in the event's proceedings.¹⁷³ Alongside 'the old veteran' of '67 who attended the demonstration, stood the 'country stripling who in later years had heard the story at his father or mothers knee'.¹⁷⁴ Standing on the political platform on the occasion, the 'old guards' and Fenian veterans had a particular resonance for the younger generation present. They were there to represent the link with the physical force tradition, something which the younger men could emulate. A Mr. Pender, from the Old Guard Union in Dublin, who was received with loud cheers, said he was present 'as the representative of the Fenians and the son of a Fenian'.¹⁷⁵ More emphasis was placed on the young by the IRB in Cork city and Clare (who were at this time, often treated in association because of the links between the IRB in both counties) and the special police noted a transition in secret society circles;

The old '67 Fenians deride the possibility of armed insurrection and say the day is past for it. They say the next generation may see England overthrown, and that then possibly the present youth of this country may have a chance, but they refuse to countenance any secret organisation for physical force at present'.¹⁷⁶

But at the same time, while the older '67 veterans were conferred with a certain iconic status, it was apparent that younger and more energetic men were emerging who were anxious for the torch to be passed on. It was reported at that young men were eager to assert their capabilities for physical force activism and replace what they (admittedly somewhat justifiably) perceived was an increasingly moderate and subdued Fenian movement.¹⁷⁷ IRB activists, who recollected their involvement in the movement in

¹⁷² CC, 5 September 1903.

¹⁷³ The main speakers included Mr P.J. O'Brien (old Guard Union, Dublin) who was 'introduced as an old '67 man', Patrick McInerney, (IRB county centre) Mr P. Bracken, (IRB organiser, Templemore) and Daniel Casey, 'a very extreme IRB man' from Kilkee. CC, 5 September 1903; CBS, 27098/S; CBS, 1224/S.

¹⁷⁴ CC, 5 September 1903.

¹⁷⁵ CC, 5 September 1903.

¹⁷⁶ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 23 April 1901, 24517/S.

¹⁷⁷ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 1 May 1901, 24554/S.

later years, were also of this opinion. Michael Brennan, who was sworn into the IRB in 1898, recalled that many older members were ‘the conspirator type and didn’t want to fight at all. Our fellows wanted to get out in the open and fight. They just pushed the old IRB men aside’.¹⁷⁸ This friction between younger and older members was nowhere more apparent than at the Kilrush Manchester Martyr demonstration in 1903. The speech of young, T. Lorrigan, (formerly of Labasheeda and by 1903 residing in Nashville, Tennessee) at the demonstration sounded very much like the adage ‘out with the old’: ‘the old guard (i.e. IRB) had had its time...he was there as the youthful member of the young guard on whom the hope and future of Ireland depended.’¹⁷⁹

By the late nineteenth century the IRB wielded a significant influence in small town and urban provincial affairs. At various periods throughout the century the members of the brotherhood aligned themselves with various movements which served to influence radical nationalist ideas. This approach proved particularly important in mobilising the youth – through organisations such as the GAA, and later within the Gaelic League, and through the auspices of the ’98 centenary. Through their dominance of these cultural nationalist organisations, IRB men played an important role in reconstructing nationalist memory, serving to assert the physical force nature of Irish nationalism. This group facilitated the manifestation of a radical political thought which challenged those representatives of ecclesiastical and state administration at local level - the policeman and the cleric.

¹⁷⁸ Carlton Younger, *Ireland’s Civil War* (London, 1979) p. 60.

¹⁷⁹ *CC*, 5 September 1903.

Chapter Four: Authority figures and popular politics: priests and police.

The late nineteenth century witnessed changes in rural and urban areas. The increasing consolidation of church power and the growing enforcement of state legislation witnessed a transformation locally as a greater number of police and priests were brought into the local community. These men became increasingly involved in carrying out national changes locally, in the implementation of religious reform on the one hand, and legislative reform on the other. Through their role in implementing these changes these men brought a new dimension to the nature of the community. It was during this period that they became increasingly equated with authority, as these men in carrying out their duties, increasingly impinged upon the lives of the urban and rural inhabitant.

This growing influence of such authority figures in the local community was particularly felt in relation to the catholic clergy. County Clare clergy served in either one of the two dioceses which spanned the county in the late nineteenth century. The diocese of Killaloe (which encapsulated the counties of Limerick, Offaly, Laois, and most of Clare and Tipperary) covered a large southern portion of the county, with a total of thirty-four parishes. The diocese of Kilfenora and Kilmacudagh (encapsulating the counties of Galway, Mayo and Clare) covered the northern part of the county and had a total of eight parishes in this region.¹ Within these two dioceses the clergy were, in the post-famine period, particularly involved in enforcing the changes brought about by the ‘devotional revolution’ (a period of religious reform for the Catholic Church).² It was during this period that the Catholic hierarchy sought to impose significant cultural changes in Clare and throughout the island. It became particularly apparent by the replacement of popular traditions such as wakes, ‘stations’, pilgrimages, patterns and seasonal festivals and superstitious beliefs with ‘standardized, usually imported, clerically vetted alternatives, performed in the local church building and integrated into a process of personal sanctification’.³ In Clare, tighter social discipline was exercised

¹ *Guys Directory*, 1893.

² Emmet Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (Washington, 1984) pp 77-78.

³ S.J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford 1998) p. 145

by the local population over the celebrations of ‘patterns’, events traditionally associated with pagan worship and the occasional scenes of drunkenness, which were subsumed into Catholic worship.⁴ Popular patterns, such as those in Lahinch, were replaced by Catholic celebrations such as Garland Sunday, a day in honour of Saint Brigid, and wells, such as those of Saint Senan’s Kilkee (used for healing eyes and swelled limbs in pre-famine times) were also adopted into the new religion.⁵ This period also witnessed the construction of churches that showcased the devotional changes that were happening nationally. Instruments of ‘devotional change’ introduced in churches throughout the county, included the introduction of Sunday sermons, an increasing emphasis on church liturgy (such as Confession and Communion) and encouragement of ‘devotional exercises’ which included the ‘Rosary’ and the promulgation of doctrines such as the ‘Immaculate Conception’.⁶ This change in the nature of devotion and prayer was evident in the refurbishment of churches, which were now adorned with colourful pictures, murals and stained glass displays, of the Sacred Heart, Blessed Virgin and the crucifixion. This religious iconography was not only evident in religious institutions and church buildings, but in the very nature of people’s homes. When St. Flannan’s College opened in Ennis in 1862, many local residents donated ‘all our window hangings and religious pictures’ to decorate the new building.⁷ All of these changes to Catholic worship included a ‘musical reform’ and a literary reform. The newly erected Ennis pro-Cathedral (built in 1842) set up bands and choirs which were established to introduce and emphasise, through newly produced songs and hymns, the grandeur and centrality of the church. These developments were paralleled by the publication and circulation in the county of illustrative prayer books, catechisms, holy pictures and also prescriptive works (such as those published by the Catholic Truth Society in Dublin). Outside the environs of the church, spiritual guidance was given at parish missions, confraternities and religious clubs established at various urban centres throughout the county, including Newmarket-on-Fergus in east Clare, Kilrush in west Clare, Ennistymon in the north of the county, and in Ennis, which included the Catholic

⁴ S.J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845* (Dublin, 1982) p. 143

⁵ *CI*, 29 July 1875. T.J. Westropp, *Folklore of Clare* (Dublin, 2003) p. 51

⁶ Emmett Larkin, ‘The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875’, *The American Historical Review* (June, 1972) p.645.

⁷ Diary of P.J. Dillon Ennis, MS 23, 423, 29 September 1862.

Young Men's Association and the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart.⁸ All of this reflected the increasingly flamboyant and colourful changes implemented from the top down throughout this period, as well as the Catholic church's and clergy's growing political and social influence.⁹

The increasing influence of the Catholic clergy brought changes to the construction of political identity, increasing the association of Catholicism with popular nationalism.¹⁰ Locally, these changes were apparent in the Ennis Catholic clergy's reaction to the attack on the Papal States, with the enforcement of an 'ultramontane' style of identity that was centred upon and revolved around the hierarchy and Rome. At the cathedral in Ennis 'national requiem mass was held for those who fell 'fighting for the sovereign pontiff in Italy'.¹¹ Following the return of the papal brigade in Ennis, the clergy served to enforce this identification. They informed the four thousand assembled in the Ennis pro-Cathedral that the soldier's service was 'not for the Saxon shilling, but for the cause of true liberty and Christian independence'.¹²

Yet while radical and far reaching changes were occurring within the church in this period, perhaps the most significant was brought about, not to the nature of the religion, but among the clergy themselves. In line with national trends, the number of priests increased in the county from approximately eighty-seven in 1841 to 114 in 1911. This increase does not seem substantial, until one takes into consideration the significant depopulation of the county in the post-famine period. In 1841 Clare had roughly one priest to every 3,291 people, but seventy years later, following a population decline of sixty-three per cent in conjunction with a twenty-five per cent increase in the number of Catholic clergy, there was an average of one priest to every 914 people in the county.¹³

⁸ Emmett Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850- 1875', *The American Historical Review* (June 1972) passim. Connolly, *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, p. 145; *Clare County Express*, December 2010, p. 9; *CJ*, 23 June, 21 July 1856, 1, 15, January 1856, 10 May 1858, 11, 15, November 1869.

⁹ K.T. Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984) pp 203-204. *CF*, 21 December 1861, 4 January 1862. Rev. J. B. McLaughlin, O.S.B. *A Dialogue on Socialism* (London, 1908). This book was in the possession of my great-grandfather, John Maguire, Kilclogher, Cross, Kilrush, Co. Clare.

¹⁰ *CJ*, 2 July, 18 October 1860.

¹¹ *CJ*, 2 July, 18 October 1860.

¹² *CJ*, 8 November 1860.

¹³ Vaughan and Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics, Population 1821- 1971*, pp 8-9; Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911* SN: 3495.

With this expanding influence, the clergy became increasingly involved in local and day-to-day affairs. To the small farmer in Clare, the priest was a figure of considerable clout and was frequently involved in settling conflicts, providing employment and advice. The priests were prominent representatives of the tenantry at times of economic distress and their knowledge was utilised to come to amicable arrangements with their landlords.¹⁴ They were often called upon to restore order amongst crowds in the late nineteenth century, when violence erupted between opposing factions. On the other hand, their officiousness was often interpreted as interference, and based on his experience of Mayo, George Moore believed that it often was to the detriment of the individual.¹⁵ This was, Moore believed, because of the priests' concentration on controlling sexual morality, something which became conspicuous in Ennis at this period: 'Father Mat tore the clothes off two bad girls on College Road and carried home the toggeries to the Deans [the Dean Kenny of Ennis] house as a trophy'.¹⁶ For the great majority of the population however, persistent priestly interference was acutely apparent at elections, when the clergy were often viewed as having a prohibitive influence on the nature of the parishioners' political opinions. A phrase borrowed from Fenianism and which was to gain popularity among some Clare nationalists after the 1860s, emphasises the negative manner in which the clergy's increasing authority in rural society was regarded: 'no priests in politics'.¹⁷

While the clergy were often involved in enforcing compliance with the law, the enforcement of order and conformity in the community was the task designated to the RIC. Since the introduction of the RIC in 1836, laws and state regulation increasingly impinged upon the daily lives of the rural and small town population. 'Its enormous range of duties, as reflected in minutely detailed regulations which moved majestically through Agricultural Statistics, Auctions, Dog Acts, Drill, Elections, Funerals, Inflammatory Placards, and much else to Vagrancy and Wrecks, quickly intruded its

¹⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on the land law Ireland Act, 1881 and the Purchase of Land Ireland Act, 1885*, HC, 1887, XXVI, pp 739-740.

¹⁵ George Moore, *The Untilled Field* (London, 1976) p. 27.

¹⁶ Diary of P.J. Dillon Ennis, ms 23, 423, 4 January 1864. Diocesan Archives Ennis, Fr. Patrick Horan PP. It was reported that Fr. Horan, who served as PP of Kildysart in the early 1850s, frequently condemned women from the altar at mass 'who got themselves into trouble'. For similar instances see, *CF*, 15 September 1855; *CJ*, 12 September 1855.

¹⁷ *CI*, 18 August 1877.

members into every sphere of Irish life'.¹⁸ In the post-famine period, individuals were constantly summoned to local courts for breaches of legislation such as the Sabbath Act which allowed for the prosecution of those who engaged in any sporting, leisure or work pursuits on a Sunday.¹⁹ Individuals as young as fifteen years were prosecuted in court for committing minor offences such as playing bowling on a Sunday.²⁰ Many of those prosecuted by the constabulary attempted to resist arrest, while in court they often protested against the unfairness of the legislation.²¹ Such prosecution had a dual effect: it created a strong dislike of the constabulary and mistrust of state legislation while also facilitating the increasing politicisation of the rural community.²² As Vaughan has commented, 'the petty sessions came to impinge on the lives of ordinary people as much, if not as frequently and persistently as the confessionals and the national school'.²³ An individuals' appearance in court, something which was broadcast far and wide in the newspapers, was not just popular entertainment, but frequently lessons in political education. Newspapers published detailed court proceedings in which individuals who had been prosecuted sang protest songs and shouted resistance in court, which served to make the protest as accessible to the reader as much as if they had been present at the trial.²⁴ One man summoned before the court for the minor offence of planting turnips on the Sabbath sang:

If laws were made for every degree,
 To curb vice in others as well as in me
 What a pity I had not better company,
 At the bar of the courthouse, Kilkee²⁵

As the late nineteenth century progressed, the local population frequently drew attention to their grievances and opinions in court, mostly through shouting party slogans and

¹⁸ Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland 1832 – 1885*, p. 409.

¹⁹ Those who violated the Sabbath Act were faced with the payment of a fine. These fines were usually small averaging 12 pence, which was about a seventh of an agri - labourer's weekly wage in 1860. Male agricultural labourer's weekly wages in Clare in 1861 was seven shillings. *Agricultural labourers (Ireland): return of the average rate of the weekly earnings of agricultural labourers in Ireland, for the six months previous to 1 January 1861, furnished from each county, so far as the same can be ascertained*, H.C., 1862, LX.105, p. 2.

²⁰ *CF*, 5 July 1860, 14 June, 9 August, 30 August 1862; *CJ*, 9 June 1851.

²¹ *CJ*, 26 May 1851, 28 May 1860, *CF*, 14 June, 2 August 1862.

²² W.E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994) p. 168.

²³ Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants*, p. 165.

²⁴ *CJ*, 5, 26, 28, May 1856; *CF*, 2 August 1862.

²⁵ *CJ*, 25 May 1854.

rallying cries, but in instances such as this, reciting their own protest songs.²⁶ These instances highlight the extent to which popular attention was becoming increasingly directed against (what they perceived) as the injudicious and, as the case of the poem above, partisan nature, of the laws enforced in this period. Nonetheless, while the enforcement of such laws was interpreted negatively, instances of such accounts reported in the press and witnessed in public, served to increasingly educate the rural population, on the nature of such law and its administration.

The imprint which the administration and its representatives, the RIC, made upon the fabric of the local community from the 1850s onwards was becoming apparent not only in the local petty session courts, but also through the frequency with which members of the force participated in and enjoyed popular social pursuits. From the 1850s onwards, sport which served to ‘promote social cohesion, sustain particular relations of authority, and inculcate [the] dominant values’ of the existing order, paradoxically contributed in a greater measure to the RIC’s integration with the local community.²⁷ By the late nineteenth century, more time was given to RIC members to engage in their own sports events which were apparently much supported and anticipated by many of the force. Despite the efforts of local UIL boycotters, one police officer commented that the 1902 Ennis RIC sports meeting was a success and ‘will prevent any attempts being made to interfere with our sports again’.²⁸ Popular sports and athletic events staged for members of the RIC and their wives in Ennis in 1889 attracted ‘large gatherings’ of people from the town and brought groups from as far away as Limerick, Waterford and Dublin. These events were held in the Abbey Field in Ennis, and staged activities such as tug-of-war, hammer throwing, bicycle races and featured bands and music.²⁹ Such sporting events were for a very practical reason: they promoted fitness within the force and, like other sporting events participated in by nationalists within the GAA, celebrated displays of masculine prowess.³⁰ These events which were publicised in local newspapers, and drew large crowds from surrounding areas, succeeded in bringing together a greater level of cohesion between people and police. In instances where both civilians and RIC

²⁶ *CJ*, 12 December 1887.

²⁷ Stephen W. Pope, ‘Negotiating the Folk Highway of the Nation: Sport, Public Culture and American Identity’, *Journal of Social History* (1993) pp 333, 334.

²⁸ CO 904/74, Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, January 1899.

²⁹ *LL*, 2 June 1889.

³⁰ Elizabeth Malcolm, *The Irish Policeman: 1822-1922: A Life* (Dublin, 2006) p. 186.

men participated in the same sports, these events permitted a bridging of the political gulf between police and people, as was clear in the case of Constable Thomas Thompson of Blackbuoy station in Limerick city, who, in 1887 resigned ‘as a protest against the inhuman treatment Mr. (William) O’Brien is being subjected to in Tullamore’. His resignation drew considerable support from the nationalist press and general public, since he was reputedly, ‘deservedly popular’ in the city where he was a member of the Garryowen Football Club, and generally ‘well known in athletic circles’.³¹ As a representative of the law in small town and urban environments, the RIC man was becoming a familiar person within the local community, sometimes accepted, and at the very least, acknowledged. The force’s presence was to become increasingly apparent, with membership of the RIC rising in the county in the post-famine period, from approximately 273 in 1841 to 474 in 1911 – i.e., from one police man to every 1,049 people in 1841 to one per 219 in 1911.³²

These local authority figures of priest and policeman were to play a growing role in rural and small town affairs. Their growing centrality in rural life was particularly felt in the world of local politics. The Catholic clergy had become increasingly involved in nationalist political events since the O’Connellite period, and despite legislation to prevent clerical involvement in political matters, the post-famine period marked a deeper intervention by the clergy in local politics.³³ At Sixmilebridge in 1852, both the clergy and landlords competed for control of votes in the county election, culminating in a violent riot and the death of six men and one woman at the hands of the military.³⁴ On this occasion, intimidation was practiced on both sides. On the popular side both the Rev. Michael Clune and Rev. John Burke were charged with exciting the people to riot against opposing voters and the military in the town. Fr. Burke actually took part personally in the riot, brandishing a whip [whilst shouting] - ‘Boys, fight for your

³¹ *MN*, 16 November 1887.

³² Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911*, SN: 3495.

³³ Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832- 1885*, p. 243; *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare County Election Petition; together with the proceedings of the Committee (1853)*, H.C. 1852 – 1853, IX, pp 3, 45, 103, 14, 15, 16, 29, 36, 38, 39, 40,48, 58, 68, 71.

³⁴ *CJ*, 20, 29 July 1852; 5, 9, 23 August 1852; 2 June 1853.

religion'.³⁵ Subsequent elections revealed that the clergy became increasingly associated by the administration with corruption. At the 1860 election, agents for the Liberal candidate, Colonel White included Father McQuaide, parish priest of O'Callaghan's Mills, who set up camp in a voter's house where 'as the men voted they came in and were given drink by [his] orders'.³⁶

The clergy's deeper intervention into local politics created divisions between the clergy and the more independent portion of an increasing politically minded laity. At the election of 1865, Father Kenny was met with great hostility by crowds in Ennis for his support of a borough member and candidate in the liberal interest, Captain William Stacpoole. The tension was perhaps aggravated by a recent dispute between the deanery of Ennis and the secretary of the Trades, who was alleged to have misappropriated funds collected for the erection of the O'Connell monument, and who supported the rival liberal candidate John Moloney.³⁷ At the nomination, the priest was continuously interrupted throughout by opposing crowds (apparently composed of artisans and labourers) who shouted: 'You are advancing a bad man Dean', 'Send him back to England', 'It's no use Dean', and 'He'll never go back to parliament as our member'. Crowds present openly disagreed with the cleric's political opinions. In Dean Kenny's estimation:

I have never received so many marks of disrespect, as I have received from you this morning. A voice: 'well, you are on the wrong side' (laughter and cheers).....I appear amongst you as one of yourselves, (cries of 'no no' and groans)... I never felt so humiliated in my life. I never felt so lowered in the public estimation.³⁸

Thus, while the clergy's intervention in politics was becoming more apparent it was obviously not welcomed by some sections of the community who were at this time beginning to either assert their own political opinions or transferring them to the control

³⁵ *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare County Election Petition; together with the proceedings of the Committee (1853)*, H.C. 1852-1853, IX pp 15, 16, 36, 38, 103, 574; K. T. Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London, 1999) p. 246.

³⁶ *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare Election with the Proceedings of the Committee (1860)*, H.C. 1860, XI, p.52.

³⁷ Sheedy, *Clare Elections*, p. 234; Dublin Diocesan Papers, Dublin Diocesan Archives, Cullen Papers, Laity, July-December 1862, 340/6/18, 'Division between clergy and M.G Considine over the alleged embezzlement of funds'.

³⁸ *CF*, 15 June 1865.

of other agencies, leading a quite partisan local newspaper to comment that ‘the people don’t want their priests to judge them in political matters’.³⁹

While the RIC’s interest in local political campaigns and episodes was certainly not as marked as that of the priests, there were signs of a rising interest in political concerns in the police force following the abortive rising of the Irish Confederation in 1848. Radical newspapers were considered to have stirred ‘disaffection’ within the ranks of the RIC. According to the *Clare Journal* (who were perhaps, aggravated by rising local circulation of its rival political publications), this was believed to have been

Ripened if not sown by the *Nation* and the *United Irishman* both largely read at the various police stations throughout the country. Here is another and a very lamentable instance of the folly of suffering treasonable periodicals to go on unmolested in their disorganising mission, until they have debauched the public mind, and alienated, or at least disturbed the allegiance of the queen’s servants.⁴⁰

Such newspapers were certainly read by members of the Broadford Constabulary Barracks, where a sub-constable was denoted for writing to the Confederate newspaper, the *Irish Felon*, in Dublin.⁴¹ This link with insurrectionary nationalism resurfaced in 1860 and a handful of instances revealed that some members of the constabulary were sympathetic to Fenianism, including sub Constable Thomas Hogan (a figure who, still recalled some seventy years later) used to ‘go out drilling the boys’.⁴² In Caher, near Scariff, East Clare, two constabulary men were responsible for facilitating Thomas Halloran, a suspected Fenian and also an ex-constable, in his escape from prison, while in another instance a sub-constable in Feakle was found to have letters in his possession written by a Fenian suspect in the district.⁴³ However, the majority of the RIC were determined by their actions to remain loyal to the force, some giving the illusion that they were operating in sympathy with prominent Fenian rebels in Feakle, East Clare, for some months, before they passed on the information to their superiors.⁴⁴

³⁹ *CF*, 15 July 1865.

⁴⁰ *CJ*, 3 April 1848.

⁴¹ *CJ*, 31 August 1848.

⁴² Local Studies, Ennis, Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 174, Cluain Aodha, Baile an Luadhain, Seán Ó Seanacháin, p. 164; CSO/ICR/S, 1865-1867, p.539; *CJ*, 15 March 1866; Fenian Papers, Box Nine, R Series, No 4927R.

⁴³ *CJ*, 15 March 1866; Fenian Papers, Box Nine, R Series, No 4927R.

⁴⁴ Fenian Papers, Box Four, F 3693.

This tactic seems to have been also employed by most of the clergy, who, while being opposed to Fenianism in general, appear to have also created an illusion of sympathy with the movement. This was not so much with a view to acquire information about the movement and maintain order but also, to capitalise on the popular sympathies the rebels had evoked in their respective communities. However, as was also the case of the RIC, there was evidence that some priests genuinely sympathised with the actions of the Fenian leaders. According to one unsympathetic landlord, the priests in Clare were ‘acting a double part, some denouncing Fenianism and others designating it ‘the regenerator of Ireland’s wrongs’’.⁴⁵ Some priests were even accused of personally facilitating Fenian plans. Father P. White, parish priest of Carrigaholt was described in 1867 as having been ‘shut up in a house’ with leaders of the rising in Kilbaha and ‘afterwards exerted himself to conceal them, until he sent them to America’.⁴⁶ In Ennistymon, Father Kemmy was known to have harboured the leader of the rising in Ennis, Major Charles O’Brien.⁴⁷ Clare’s own version of Patrick Lavelle was Jeremiah Vaughan, parish priest of Moylesik (near Doora).⁴⁸ A former Confederate supporter, member of the Brotherhood of Saint Patrick and ally of the IRB, Father Vaughan emigrated to America in 1865 ‘with the avowed object of collecting funds to build a chapel, but from newspaper reports, he paid more attention to the Fenian movement, and attended many Fenian meetings in that country’.⁴⁹ Clerical sympathy for Fenianism resurfaced following the execution of the Manchester Martyrs in 1867 when the clergy celebrated masses in memory of the executed men while many also actively took part in the Amnesty Campaign and in fundraising for Fenian prisoners and their families.⁵⁰ Despite hierarchical resentment, it was perhaps easier for the clergy to get involved in Fenian demonstrations – the organisation itself being ‘brought within the canon of popular Catholicism by the executions’ – following the publicity generated by the condemned men’s court room words, ‘God Save Ireland’ at Manchester.⁵¹ Although this fusing of the political and the religious served to justify the local clergy’s political involvement (for themselves at the very least), their use of violent rhetoric and allusions

⁴⁵ *CJ*, 19 March 1868.

⁴⁶ Fenian Papers, R Series, R4924.

⁴⁷ *Irish People* (NY), 18 November 1867.

⁴⁸ Gerard Moran, *Radical Irish Priests 1660-1970* (Dublin, 1998) p. 111.

⁴⁹ Fenian Papers, Box Two, F2204; *CF*, 19 April 1862, 13 May 1865; *CJ*, 18 March 1859.

⁵⁰ *Irishman*, 7, 14, 21, 28, December 1867, 4 January 1868. Fenian Papers R Series, Box 16 4924R.

⁵¹ K. T. Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London, 1999) p. 175.

to physical force suggests that many had active sympathies with Fenianism. In Clare it was noted that most of the clergy had ‘by letter or speeches appeared before the public more or less in support of Fenianism or agrarian outrage’.⁵² The most ‘violent speech’ was delivered by Father White of Carrigaholt at a Amnesty meeting in Kilrush, who, ‘raising his arm above his head’ told crowds present that ‘the Irish never got anything from the English government, unless what they wrung from them through fear, or by the strength of their own right arm’ - and concluded with the words ‘God Save Ireland’.⁵³

As many of the police and priests came from a farming background, it was therefore unsurprising that some became identified with the concerns of the land agitation.⁵⁴ In fact constables were even alleged to have been directly implicated in moonlighting incidents and their correspondence to the administration showed a detestation of landlords equal to that of the staunchest adherents of the Land League.⁵⁵ As Clifford Lloyd (Divisional Magistrate) remarked retrospectively, both land activists and RIC men were, after all, of the same social background and thus, in some cases, disposed to manifest similar sympathies.⁵⁶

During the height of the Land War in the 1880s many of the law enforcers found it difficult to distance themselves from popular nationalist attitudes and many resignations occurred within the RIC in protest against the harsh coercive measures enforced by the government. A growing dissatisfaction arose among the rank-and-file especially concerning the carrying out of evictions. Among the RIC, resignations occurred in defiance of ‘the persecution of the people’ and the oppressive measures occasioned by the ‘policy of the Tory government’ under the Coercion Act.⁵⁷ In many instances, the role of the clergy and the RIC in popular causes worked hand in hand: resignations that occurred in Kilrush were a mark of protest against evictions which were deliberately

⁵² Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5126R.

⁵³ Fenian Papers, Box Sixteen 4924R.

⁵⁴ Census of Ireland 1901, County Clare, National Archives of Ireland website; *Guys Directory*, 1893, See Also Ignatius Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe, 1850 – 1904* (Dublin, 1995) p. 115

⁵⁵ *CJ*, 7 March 1889; CO904/76, Reel 41, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, August 1902.

⁵⁶ Clifford Lloyd, *Ireland under the Land League* (London, 1892) p. 137.

⁵⁷ *CI*, 29 September 1887; Colonial Office Papers (903), National Archives Kew, (cited hereafter as CO903) 2 p. 5.

carried out during the hearing of mass.⁵⁸ Outside Clare, in the County Limerick town of Bruff, a constable Dorney resigned rather than arrest the nationalist parish priest Father Fahy; and a constable Sweeny who was ordered to arrest Dorney resigned in a similar manner. Appearing before the Bruff Irish National League, Constable Sweeney thanked them for the way they had welcomed him ‘from the hands of an overbearing government’ (cheers).⁵⁹ These defections or resignations among the constabulary often became popular celebratory events, bonfires were lit, hurling matches were staged, testimonials were raised, national airs were sung and large crowds gathered from the surrounding community. Such were the type of celebrations staged for a constable who had resigned from the force on Boffin Island and who departed to America wearing green ribbons in his buttonhole and was met with cheers by local inhabitants.⁶⁰

If resentment was generated among police constables by agrarian related events, political expectations also had an impact on their attitudes and behaviour. In the mid 1880s, excitement was evident among the RIC rank-and-file in anticipation of Home Rule. On his tour of the county Clare in the autumn of 1886, Sir Redvers Buller noted that the parliamentary debate surrounding the first Home Rule Bill had put all Irish officials ‘sitting on the fence’. ‘For the past six months the policemen were preparing for Home Rule’ and ‘in short’, he added, ‘they were all preparing to turn’.⁶¹ In 1891, before Gladstone’s attempt to push for another Home Rule Bill, constables in Ennis were accused of engaging in debates on the Home Rule question, with one officer reported to have commented casually enough that ‘Gladstone would surely go in at the next election at the rate the Home Rulers were capturing the seats’.⁶² This sense of expectation affected even those above the rank-and-file in the force, and the Parnellite split raised the excitement further, endangering discipline within the force. In 1893, Head Constable Maurice O’Halloran was removed from the Ennis district for his

⁵⁸ Ignatius Murphy, ‘The Vandeleur evictions, Kilrush 1888’, *The Other Clare* Vol. 4, (April 1980) pp 37-41.

⁵⁹ *MN*, 9, 16, April 1887.

⁶⁰ *CJ*, 7 April 1887.

⁶¹ Gloucester Archives, D2455/PCC/45, Letters from Sir Redvers Buller to Michael Hicks Beach, Letters dated (9 September 1886, 20 October 1886)

⁶² *CJ*, 14 August 1890.

support of Home Rule.⁶³ Although little is mentioned on this subject in the sources generally, the county inspector highlighted the problem:

Head Constable O'Halloran was for a long time engaged on detective duty in Clare, and at one time was considered a useful efficient policeman, but latterly he did not maintain his reputation. At the time of the split in the nationalist party it was alleged he needlessly identified himself with the Parnellites, and in this way incurred the displeasure of the other side, who were disposed to make grave allegations against him, and to endeavour to seek an opportunity of injuring him professionally.

The Inspector General, 'not deeming O'Halloran a suitable man to maintain discipline in a large station as Ennis transferred him to another station' with the consent of the County Inspector of Clare, and 'without any interference by the chief Secretary'.⁶⁴

Perhaps fearful of incurring the displeasure of their superiors, members of the RIC and clergy were reluctant to identify themselves overtly with nationalist causes. For this reason, many of the clergy cautiously participated in local branches and demonstrations of the Land League during the Land War (1879-1882). At this time, there were few instances of members of the clergy occupying the political platform in these years and their support for local branches was minimal at best. In 1880, twenty-nine demonstrations of the Land League were reported in newspapers, fourteen of which the clergy attended. Many, as was the case in Tipperary, were not active presidents or official members of Land League branches as they were to be some years later.⁶⁵ Of the twenty-eight branches analysed in the year 1880, six were presided over by the clergy, who were not involved in initiating local branches. For those few who were involved in its initial formation, their behaviour was considered to be quite 'radical' and frowned upon by their clerical superiors and colleagues.⁶⁶ This was because many of the conservative clerics associated the Land League with 'Fenians' and 'men of the dynamite stamp' – an accusation that was not altogether unfounded considering that the IRB had provided much of the organisation and leadership drive for Clare Land League

⁶³ CO903/3, p. 14, 31, July 1893.

⁶⁴ CO903/3, p. 14, 31, July 1893. For more information on government regulations banning police on participation in the Home Rule issue see Colonial Office Papers, CO903/3, p. 15 'The Royal Irish Constabulary and the Home Rule Bill'. 1 April 1893.

⁶⁵ James O'Shea, *Priest, Politics and Society in Post-famine Ireland: A Study of County Tipperary 1850-1891* (Dublin, 1983) pp 73-76.

⁶⁶ Dublin Diocesan Papers, Dublin Diocesan Archives, Cardinal McCabe File 1, Irish Bishops, 346/1/42, 11 May 1880, MacEvilly, Tuam.

branches in their initial years.⁶⁷ Clerical involvement in land-related issues, however, became more pronounced in the years following Parnell's inauguration of the National League. In fact, many of the clergy considered that the National League, with its focus on Home Rule, was perhaps less violent than the 'agrarian revolution' brought about by the Land League.⁶⁸ In Kilrush Rev Thomas O'Meara stated that farmers' aspirations could not be realised until they became the owners of the land they tilled. 'This could not be satisfied by secret societies or midnight torches, but by the moral force pointed out by Parnell'.⁶⁹ Father Wall, in Kilmurry McMahon, inaugurating a branch of the League in 1884, acknowledged the implicit sanction the hierarchy had given the new movement, and attempted to disassociate it from its rebellious past. He told crowds that

By you all putting your shoulders to the wheel to assist the uphill work approved of by the bishops and priests of Ireland, and in the end we will triumph (cheer). The agitation now carried on in this country has no connection whatever with Fenians or dynamiters, nor with the manufacturers of outrages. It if had I would not speak one word for its advancement but I know the leaders of the Irish people have aspirations more noble than men of the dynamite stamp, who could never serve Ireland by such flagitious and unworthy designs. We want our grievances addressed in the light of day....⁷⁰

Yet, despite their initial reluctance to support the land agitation, priests soon became heavily identified with enforcing 'boycotts' and encouraging land-related disputes. For instance, in 1887, local animosities were fuelled by the clergy against a 'grabber' named Sexton in Lisdoonvarna, North Clare. The event served to exemplify how the law operated in a local community, and the changes it had witnessed. The social advancement of many of the Catholic bourgeois class, who obtained senior positions as administrators in their local communities, brought with it changes to the operation of the law in local areas, as the once Protestant and conservative establishment was replaced by an emerging Catholic nationalist administrative elite.⁷¹ Appearing in court, Sexton's mother (a Catholic) told how a local boycott staged against the family was organised by a combination of clergy, magistrates and doctors who, in her opinion, were 'ruining the parish'. The growing identification of such administrators such as the

⁶⁷ *CI*, 5 June 1880, 25 October 1884; *CJ*, 20 December 1883.

⁶⁸ McGee, *The IRB*, p. 104; Hoppen, *Conflict and Conformity*, p. 176.

⁶⁹ *CJ*, 20 December 1883.

⁷⁰ *CI*, 25 October 1884.

⁷¹ Laurence McBride, *The Greening of Dublin Castle: The transformation of bureaucratic and judicial personnel in Ireland, 1892-1922* (Washington, DC, 1991) p. ix.

clergy and magistrates with nationalist campaigns in the late nineteenth century was evident during the construction of a hut on the land for the previous evicted owner, Thomas Slattery:

A Justice of peace who was on a car with clergymen came off the car...the people were walking two by two past our house headed by a band playing national airs and shouting at us...it was hard enough when our hay had to be cut by moonlight by some parties who sympathised with us and knew we were wronged...I think if Father [Edmond] Power had not interfered it would have been better for the whole of us.⁷²

Through their enthusiastic support of nationalist causes these priests succeeded in fomenting mutual distrust not only between neighbours, but also between the population and the law, as the administration found it acutely difficult to check the power of such clerics as popular agitators. They were responsible for maintaining branches of the Irish National League at a time when many had been proclaimed or 'broken up' - 'but for the efforts' of priests such as 'Father [Robert] Little of Sixmilebridge, it might be regarded as extinct'.⁷³ While efforts were made by the authorities to stop branches in Sixmilebridge, Carron and Miltown Malbay, these attempts were, 'hampered by the priests... who endeavour to keep the branches alive'.⁷⁴ The priest's leadership also helped to forge a strong link between the clergy and the younger (especially male) population. In Miltown Malbay, Father White was president of the local National League branch whose membership consisted of young men, who 'had no stake whatever in the country'.⁷⁵ Young men were similarly conspicuous by their membership at the Sixmilebridge branch of the Land League under its president, Fr. Robert Little. Following the implementation of the Crimes Act in 1887, proclaiming branches of the Plan of Campaign, Fr. R. Little persistently supported the land movement by staging meetings in the Cratloe hills, where hurling matches were pre-arranged by the cleric so as to form a diversion.⁷⁶ Perhaps his popularity stemmed from the fact that he was a local 'rebel' which he periodically boasted of to unfamiliar travellers. According to one account,

⁷² *CJ*, 22 September 1887.

⁷³ CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry) Box Four, 1 January 1889.

⁷⁴ CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, 2 May 1889.

⁷⁵ CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, 5 January 1887.

⁷⁶ *MN*, 3 October 1888.

Rev. R. Little, a respectable Clare parish Priest, avers that whenever he attends sick calls, two constables follow him and await his return to the parsonage. As this Priest has frequently outwitted the constabulary, holding meetings almost within the shadow of their helmets, a mounted policeman, for whose support the barony is taxed, is especially deputed to - watch his nocturnal movements.⁷⁷

Known for his overt defiance of the law, Little's popularity was quite apparent with the youth and his potential to mobilise the support of the young men in the community in favour of nationalist campaigns was evident when he chained himself outside the home of a tenant who was threatened with eviction on the local D'Esterre estate, alongside some fifty young men.⁷⁸ It was apparent that his influence was not only upon the young: as a result of Father Little's endeavours, a settlement was effected by the landlord who accepted the terms offered by his tenant.⁷⁹

The sporadic nature of local politics in the post-famine period meant that the clergy often battled not only with an increasingly politically enlightened populace but also amongst themselves. With no effective affiliations after the death of O'Connell, the clergy were known to promote any side of the political divide, whether liberal or conservative.⁸⁰ This often led to division, as was evident during the laying of the foundation stone of the O'Connell monument in 1859. The ceremony (which was meant to be strictly non-political) quickly assumed a political character, with the cleric Fr. Vaughan, criticising the success of the Liberal candidate John Fitzgerald at the recent borough division.⁸¹ Fitzgerald was accused by Father Vaughan and his supporters, the Trades and labourers, as being a 'renegade' and implicated in bribing affluent individuals (i.e. the Town Commissioners) at the recent elections.⁸² The deputation of the clergy, headed by Dean Kenny of Ennis, attempted to remonstrate with Vaughan, but their failure to silence him revealed the hierarchy's failure to control the political affiliations of rebellious priests. The animosity between the two was perhaps aggravated

⁷⁷ Zeno, *Ireland in '89 or a brief history of Ireland from the union to the present day, to which is added a graphic sketch of scenery, minstrelsy and character* (Providence, Rhode Island, 1889) pp 55-56.

⁷⁸ *MN*, 12 January, 2 March 1887; *CJ*, 23 February 1888.

⁷⁹ *MN*, 12 January, 2 March 1887; *CJ*, 23 February 1888.

⁸⁰ Hoppen, *Elections*, p. 236.

⁸¹ Sheedy, *The Clare Elections*, p. 226

⁸² This is ironic considering that Vaughan himself was believed to be implicated in bribing voters to support Liberal candidate Luke White during his election for county member in 1859. *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare Election with the Proceedings of the Committee (1860)*, H.C. 1860, XI, pp 49,52.

considering Vaughan had recently clashed with the clergy over his proposal of liberal candidate White, at the county elections.⁸³ Encouraging the crowd present on the occasion he stated that he would; ‘not let anyone gag him (which caused uproar among the crowd)... no threat would gag him (cheers)...it was not in the power of the Bishop, Dean, or Vicar to gag him’. His remarks prompted ‘great confusion’ and the clergy and Town Commissioners left the political platform.⁸⁴

These divisions which existed among the clergy in relation to political issues revealed the cracks behind the artificial unity which the hierarchy sought to impose during the devotional revolution. It was apparent that not all of the clergy were willing to side with the political opinions of the Bishop and their clerical colleagues. Echoing Vaughan’s comments ‘I will not be gagged’, the Rev. J. Ryan, some two decades later at a Land League meeting in Ennis in 1881, condemned the actions of his ‘reverend brethren’ who ‘never refrained from interfering with the character of those who it was well known were actuated by the purest motives in the part they took in the present land agitation’. In relation to the activities of both the bishop and those clergy for their role in condemning the Land League, he believed that it was:

Hard to find themselves the object of hatred of some of the Catholic clergy, and to have unmerited abuse heaped on them (hear, hear). They better refrain from such, or he would expose their whole conduct in the matter (applause)...so far as he was personally concerned he was beyond their odium, he was out of this diocese and in political and social questions he had a perfect right to his opinion (hear, hear).⁸⁵

It was apparent that the tensions surrounding much of this political infighting between the clergy were aggravated by the fact that priests were often torn between which side to support, the popular side, or the clerical side. In Corofin, when the local priest, Fr. McNerney, condemned a Land League meeting from the altar, stating that the organiser ‘would not have a single priest with him’, he quickly ate his words when the meeting was presided over by a priest from another district, Fr. Laurence Browne. Although Browne’s ‘actions greatly distressed his reverend brethren’ he solicited the support and

⁸³ Sheedy, *The Clare Elections*, p. 227.

⁸⁴ *CJ*, 18 March 1859

⁸⁵ *CI*, 2 April 1881.

pacified the crowd, who were directing a strong animosity towards McInerney.⁸⁶ It was apparent that in these instances, despite clerical condemnation, the popular side almost invariably won out. Without joining popular movements, clergymen came in for some very real scrutiny in the communities in which they ministered. In 1885, when Father J. Loughnane, curate of Newmarket-on-Fergus, was counselled by his associates Father Sullivan and Father Walsh not to retain his presidency of the Ennis Land League, because IRB men were active in the branch, he was obliged to retire.⁸⁷ However, his actions had the effect of making him, along with his colleagues, quite unpopular in the locality. When prominent IRB men subsequently attended the meeting of the League branch, they attempted to underline the weakness of the clergy by refusing to join the League. They stated that although they had approached Loughnane and offered to relinquish control of the branch to him, after their meeting - ‘the priests met in the sacristy, and Father Loughnane was commanded under pain of disobedience not to come to the meeting today’.⁸⁸

While the division which existed between the clergy was primarily aggravated by their diverging political views, conflict amongst the RIC on the other hand, was the result of a complex mixture of social, religious and political tensions within the force. Much disagreement between the rank-and-file and their superiors existed at this time, and for a variety of reasons. Since the majority of the rank-and-file of the RIC were middling farmers sons, those lower down on the social ladder – such as artisans and labourers - often experienced social contempt from their superiors. This was particularly acute in 1883 when, due to a need to augment the force, a greater number of men of lower status (mostly artisans and labourers) were recruited. The need to increase the number of police was primarily ascribed to the ongoing land agitation, to the number of retirements due to discontent over poor pay within the force.⁸⁹ The recruitment of such men created much tension between members of the force, while superiors believed that they accounted for much of the growing indiscipline. A Constable in Waterford believed that the artisan and labouring class that was coming into the force in the 1880s,

⁸⁶ *CI*, 4 December 1880; *Times*, 30 November 1880.

⁸⁷ *CI*, 21 February 1885.

⁸⁸ *CI*, 21 February 1885.

⁸⁹ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, p. 41, 39, 266, 166.

was more liable to being ‘tainted’ with Fenianism than the former type of recruit from ‘the farming classes’ (or small farmers sons) who were, he believed, generally loyal. Associating Fenianism with the artisan and labouring class, he stated that ‘I would not trust them to the same extent as I would the others, because they must be more or less brought into direct or indirect connection with some of those agents that are about’.⁹⁰ This mistrust of the lower orders recruited into the force was also evident in Clare where, some years later, a constable in conversation with other officers disparagingly referred to the high proliferation of such labourers and artisans as ‘magpies’ who were ‘identified with the force in 1883, and who were all dismissed from their services’.⁹¹ It is possible that these social tensions had the capacity to resurrect at times of heightened political agitation, when extra police duties and lack of recruitment of the traditional small farmer son class, would have necessitated the employment of men of a lower social status. This was apparent in 1891, in Ennis, when one constable identified those members then within the force as ‘sprung for the scruff of the country’ and ‘flunkeys who were or have been cleaning out horses’ dung from gentlemen’s stables’.⁹²

Personal tensions and tensions over promotion were often behind many of these disputes between the commanding officer and his subordinate. In one instance in Ballyvaughan, a rank-and-file constable summoned the Sergeant for using abusive language and for threatening him to ‘clean the fowl house’; after he had told the sergeant that his chickens were partially accountable for the dirtiness of the barrack. In court the constable believed that his superior’s recent harshness towards him was mostly because he ‘declined to give him the name of an informant who gave me information a short time ago’.⁹³ He believed that this prejudice had incurred the Sergeant’s displeasure and influenced his decision to transfer his subordinate to Fanoremore, a nearby station, some few months previously.⁹⁴ What angered policemen

⁹⁰ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, p. 41, 27, 96, 178.

⁹¹ *CJ*, 14 August 1891. This evidence formed part of a number of allegations made by constable, later dismissed, against constables from Tulla, Corofin, and O’Callaghan’s Mills. Although the evidence was later dismissed in court – there are perhaps some grains of truth to it, as it corresponds with the views of other constables throughout the country at this time.

⁹² *CJ*, 14 August 1891.

⁹³ *CJ*, 7 April 1898.

⁹⁴ *CJ*, 7 April 1898.

the most was the way in which they were treated by their superiors.⁹⁵ Some few years earlier in Ballyvaughan, an army barrack had two stands of arms and two ammunition rifle pouches stolen. Its arms were supposedly taken by a lower ranking sub-constable who believed that he was being treated unfairly by his superior. In an attempt to seek ‘revenge’ it was alleged that the sub-constable stole the guns from the army barracks, in which his superior Constable Starr, was on duty in the same night. His actions were ascribed to a dispute he had had with Constable Starr, who had refused to grant him permission to obtain four days leave to visit his brother, who was at the time departing to Australia.⁹⁶

Sectarian issues fuelled disputes between superior officers, who were primarily Protestant, and their Catholic subordinates.⁹⁷ It was remarked in a report compiled by the constabulary commission in 1883 that ‘the impression prevails among some members of the force that sectarian issues’ affected promotion.⁹⁸ In Clare there were also accusations that members of the Protestant denomination were favoured in other regards, and it was believed that many tended to be assigned to stations that were in less remote or backward regions. As one constable in Ennis remarked in 1891, ‘Catholics were all sent to the mountains and Protestants were all sent to the good stations’.⁹⁹ Political conflict had the capacity to aggravate these tensions even further. In 1896, a series of allegations was made by some constables against District Inspector Huggins in Ennistymon, one of which was ‘that DI Huggins was guilty of a violation of duty by placing himself under obligation to members of the force in having his private horses treated by Constables James Kavanagh and Michin, and of having the latter to sell his private horses contrary to the standing regulations of the force’.¹⁰⁰ In the opinion of his accusers, the District Inspector had employed his subordinates in menial tasks to the detriment of the law and their proper role as law enforcers. The animosity which the rank-and-file had for their superior was aggravated by his political sympathies. It was

⁹⁵ Malcolm, *Irish Policeman*, p. 152.

⁹⁶ *CF*, 12 February 1870.

⁹⁷ Joost Augusteijn (ed.) *The Memoirs of John M. Regan: A Catholic Officer in the RIC and RUC 1909-1948* (Dublin, 2007) p. 10.

⁹⁸ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, p. 858.

⁹⁹ *CJ*, 14 August 1891.

¹⁰⁰ *LL*, 17 April 1896.

remarked in court that Huggins was a 'typical Orangeman'. He was later transferred to Newry, Co. Down.¹⁰¹

How did the administration cope with such politically driven indiscipline? While state legislation and ecclesiastical regulation forbade political involvement, in some instances it was difficult to entirely dissuade individual police and priests from participation.¹⁰² However, it appears that both the state and the Catholic hierarchy had measures in place to seriously deter their subordinates from involvement in popular politics. In the case of the clergy, it was evident that stricter control was exercised over priests who joined popular politics as the late nineteenth century progressed. In the 1890s, priests who recklessly identified themselves with political factions transferred to another parish. This was the fate of two clergymen in 1891, presumably for their part they took in the Parnellite 'split'. According to the constabulary these dismissals had the effect of subduing clerical 'firebrands';

The priests in Clare have become very quiet and several notorious firebrands among them have been sent out of the county, Rev Father White and McKenna of Kilrush, this has tended greatly to quiet matters there.¹⁰³

But while measures were in place for dealing with the priests, far harsher punishments were meted out to those within the RIC. While priests such as Fr. White were transferred from Kilrush to the parish of Nenagh, he seems to have continued his association with popular nationalism without much interruption.¹⁰⁴ Members of the RIC, on the other hand, underwent multiple punishments for their involvement in political activity. Constables stationed in the county in 1866 were regularly fined, transferred to stations outside the county, and if failing to heed these warnings, were dismissed (at least ten per cent of a hundred analysed were dismissed).¹⁰⁵ In the case of a constables and a sub-constable who facilitated the escape of a Fenian prisoner in

¹⁰¹ *LL*, 17 April 1896.

¹⁰² Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society*, pp 236-237.

¹⁰³ CO904/62, Reel 29, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', March 1892.

¹⁰⁴ It is possible that the constabulary reports are inaccurate and that Fr. White did not get removed from the Parish, but actually got promoted. The census for 1901 shows that Fr. Patrick White moved to house number 15 Summerhill, Nenagh East Urban, Co Tipperary, where he was appointed Dean of Killaton - Vicar General of Killaton Parish - Priest of Nenagh. He also went on to write a book in 1893, which suggests that his dismissal was not too uncomfortable. http://www.aoh61.com/history/kilbaha_1867.htm Matthew Birmingham, 'The Fenian Rising in Kilbaha', (accessed 3.1.2011). Rev Patrick White, *History of Clare and the Dalcassian clans of Tipperary, Limerick and Galway* (Dublin, 1983).

¹⁰⁵ Home Office, Kew, and newspapers.

Caher, east Clare, in 1866, each was fined two pounds and transferred to another station.¹⁰⁶ While the transfer itself might have been disruptive for such constables, particularly if they were married, they were also faced with the task of repaying the sum of two pounds (at this time, a constable's pay was approximately thirty-six pounds a year and that of a sub-constable was twenty-four). The financial penalty was compounded by the fact that the offending constable's actions were listed on a permanent record which had the effect preventing future promotion and the rate received by him in pension. Such penalties when inflicted on the defaulting constable essentially deprived him of any means through which he could improve his lot.¹⁰⁷

It was therefore apparent that despite the attempts of nationalist MPs, who sought to highlight the administrations shortcomings in dealing with police indiscipline, dismissal was common and served to restore obedience among the rank-and-file.¹⁰⁸ This was facilitated by the attitude of Courts of Inquiry which, in dealing with cases of disobedience among rank-and-file RIC men, invariably favoured the superior officer. These officers were given permission to cross-examine their subordinates in court, and since many of these men tended to be quite experienced they found it easy in many instances to undermine the evidence of their subordinates.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, while the allegations they had made might have been genuine, constables were severely punished when such Courts of Inquiry invariably favoured the superior officer. In 1898, in Lisdoonvarna, when a series of allegations were made by two rank-and-file constables against their superior Sergeant Gibbons, the court acquitted him without charge. The two constables who made the allegations, however, were each fined £2, threatened with dismissal, were given unfavourable records, and transferred to another station at their own expense.¹¹⁰

Serious incidents of police indiscipline on the part of lower grade police did not go unpunished in the RIC. Constables who failed to obey regulations in times of riot and in maintaining crowd order were transferred and de-ranked. In Kilrush, a constable was

¹⁰⁶ *CJ*, 15 March 1866.

¹⁰⁷ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, pp 467, 52-53.

¹⁰⁸ *Hansards Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 18 May 1882, vol. 269 cc. 961 – 1047.

¹⁰⁹ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, pp 24, 71; *CJ*, 7 April 1898.

¹¹⁰ *LL*, 18 April 1898.

transferred and de-ranked for neglect of duty (failing to report a local riot between rival political factions).¹¹¹ Constable O'Halloran of Ennis was dismissed in 1891 and his case throws light on the complex set of unofficial activities in which individual police could be involved. Although it was alleged this was due to his staunch support of the Parnellite faction, his dismissal was perhaps also determined by allegations in the House of Commons that previous to the constable's transfer to the town, he had been involved in provoking crime and outrage in the district of Feakle.¹¹² Another constable was dismissed from Mullagh during the same period, for charging individuals with crimes which he had instigated himself.¹¹³

But these dismissals (which were in most instances investigated by private inquiry and only briefly reported in the press) when publicised became fodder for sympathetic nationalists. Within the press, media and House of Commons, publicity was generated by the actions of the previously mentioned constable from Mullagh who, following his dismissal, was met in Massachusetts by Irish MPs, where he was 'masquerading as a patriot who had been driven from the police force'.¹¹⁴ Thus, though the reasons for dismissal of police constables varied widely, the publication of accounts (accurate or distorted) of such disciplining served to generate, both within and outside the force, a growing disgruntlement with the administration.

Priests who fell foul of their superiors, similarly tended to create popular indignation against the hierarchy and its representatives. The suspicious removal of the Rev. Edmund Shaughnessy, parish priest of Miltown Malbay in the early 1870s, prompted an indignation meeting where the inhabitants refused to pay the bishop Christmas and Easter dues.¹¹⁵ Many local groups, some of whom had were known for their association with Fenianism some years previously, formed a deputation to the bishop protesting against O'Shaughnessy's removal.¹¹⁶ While the bishop called upon a local priest, Fr. White to replace Shaughnessy, this only served to aggravate the local population

¹¹¹ CO903/2 p. 7 'Report on Riot in Kilrush; CSORP 1893. 2199.

¹¹² *Hansards Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 29 August 1887, vol. 320 cc. 280-414; *CJ*, 15 September 1887; *Hansards Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 13 September 1887, vol. 321 cc. 492-6; *Hansards Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 4 March 1887, vol. 311 cc. 1269 – 70; CO903-3, p. 14. 31, July 1893.

¹¹³ *Hansards Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, HC 10 July 1902 vol. 1. 110 cc. 1382-3.

¹¹⁴ *Hansards Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, HC 10 July 1902 vol. 1. 110 cc. 1382-3.

¹¹⁵ *CJ*, 27 June 1872, 10, 17, 31, January 1876.

¹¹⁶ *CJ*, 10 January 1876.

further. Coinciding with the arrival of Fr. White, a day of mourning was staged which, according to the local press, very nearly assumed ‘a rather serious nature’ but for the exertions of Shaughnessy who in as many words, told the crowd that he was not happy with being dismissed either, but it was better to ‘submit to the will of God’. His actions in no small way revealed a shared resentment by both priest and people who were equally responsible through speeches and meetings, in trying to prevent the hierarchy’s interference in the will of the local community. While Fr. White quickly arrived to placate the crowds he was met with much hostility, though local groups admitted that if he had come to visit the community ‘under different circumstances, he would be welcomed’.¹¹⁷

In Clare political indiscipline was attributed to what some considered the capabilities or inactivity of the bishop. While Dr. Power (who was appointed coadjutor to Bishop Flannery in 1865) was himself quite vociferous in his condemnation of the IRB, he sometimes, according to the local newspaper, turned a blind eye when the clergy evinced support for the movement.¹¹⁸ The speech of Fr. Quaid at the inauguration of the O’Connell monument in 1865 was considered by the local press to show strong Fenian sympathies, but despite this he was allowed to carry on ‘without the slightest rebuke’ from the Bishop, Dr. Power, who was chairman on the occasion.¹¹⁹ It was apparent that this clerical association with Fenianism was partly attributed to certain sections of the hierarchy allowing their subordinates to continue in their political agitation unnoticed and unchecked. In spite of Cardinal Cullen’s opinions to the contrary, Father Vaughan’s courtship of Fenianism in the 1860s was not prevented: in fact it was openly encouraged by Archbishop McHale of Tuam.¹²⁰ Priests’ support of political and agrarian reform some years later were also attributed to the actions or rather the inactions, of the then bishop, Dr. James Ryan. Bishop Ryan, appointed coadjutor to Bishop Flannery in 1871, was very much against the Land League. However he entered

¹¹⁷ *CJ*, 17 January 1876; *Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator*, 11 January 1876.

¹¹⁸ Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe, 1850-1904*, p. 204. Dr. Nicholas Power was appointed coadjutor to Bishop Michael Flannery in 1865, when he was sixty-three years of age, and died in 1871, at sixty-nine years of age.

¹¹⁹ *CF*, 7 October 1865.

¹²⁰ *Irishman*, 28 December 1867.

office at a later age than most bishops, and subsequent ill health in the late 1880s meant that he was inclined to let much of the clergy's activities go unchecked.¹²¹

Bishop Thomas McRedmond however, who entered the bishopric in 1891, at the age of fifty-three, differed from the opinions of his predecessors and was inclined to support nationalist causes. The police blamed his nationalist leanings, and his age, for a lot of the clergy's nationalist activities in the county.¹²² To the unsympathetic administration, it appeared that most of 'the action of the priests almost throughout Clare [is] owing in a good measure to the bishop (McRedmond) who is a weak imbecile and a very old man and most mischievous, and mainly accounts for the bad state of the county.'¹²³ However, McRedmond was not very old, being in his early fifties when he was appointed, and the nature of this police information seems dubious. A far more reasonable reason for McRedmond's nationalist stance was that given by Lord Morley who believed that he 'evidently took a fatalistic view' of his flock when it came to politics - believing it was easier to go with them than against them.¹²⁴

But there were many priests, who could not care less if the bishops or the hierarchy disapproved of their political involvement. Many of the clergy defied the hierarchy's interference in local affairs anyway, and this was particularly apparent during the Plan of Campaign when many continued to support the land movement following its denunciation by papal authority.¹²⁵ Father L. Gilligan staged meetings in Labasheeda where he told the crowds that 'they were not bound' by the papal rescript, 'that he [the Pope] had no control over them in matter of politics and they were only bound to obey in matters of religion'.¹²⁶ It was perhaps difficult for the administration to control those local interpretations of the rules. There is very little mention of such rebellious priests in the clerical papers, which suggests that most of the time the bishops were perhaps

¹²¹ Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe, 1850-1904*, p. 247. Dr. James Ryan was appointed coadjutor to Bishop Michael Flannery in 1871, at the age of sixty-five, and died in 1889, at the age of eighty-three.

¹²² Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe, 1850-1904*, p. 368. Dr. Thomas McRedmond was appointed coadjutor to Bishop Michael Flannery in 1889 and succeeded as bishop in 1891, at the age of fifty-three. He died in 1904, at sixty-six years of age.

¹²³ CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry) Box Four, 5 January 1887

¹²⁴ Lord Morley, *Recollections* (London, 1917), vol. 2, p. 29.

¹²⁵ *MN*, 5 December 1888; *CJ*, 21 June 1888, Michael Mac Mahon, 'Going to Jail for Boating: Fr. Laurence Gilligan and the Land War in West Clare', *The Other Clare*, 2002, pp 60-64; CBS, DCCI (Clare and Kerry), Box Four, 5 January 1887, 1 January, 2 May 1889.

¹²⁶ *CJ*, 21 June 1888; Mac Mahon, 'Going to Jail for Boating', pp 60-64.

unconscious of their activities, or perhaps simply could not monitor all of them.¹²⁷ It was also perhaps difficult to enforce conformity when many priests had, after administering in these regions for long periods, developed a rapport and sympathy with the local population. This was the case of state administrators who were appointed with the task of enforcing order in the communities in which they resided, but in some instances, their sympathies with the local population often proved to be to the detriment of their task as law enforcers. Redvers Buller, after an extended tour of the counties of Kerry and Clare to analyse the nature of the land problem, began to conflict with his appointee Michael Hick's Beech, and his aggressive ideas on the adoption of 'coercion and conciliation' in the district, favouring a milder solution to the Land question.¹²⁸ Buller's sympathies with the tenantry generated controversy particularly with Beech, whose correspondence showed an obvious disgruntlement with a man who, while appointed to be a mouthpiece for his upcoming Coercion Bill, later turned full circle and came to be regarded as somewhat of a radical for his sympathetic attitude towards local nationalist agitation.¹²⁹ When it came to political matters, both state and ecclesiastical administrations seem to have had less than complete control over the actions of their representatives locally. In the case of some local figures of authority, disobeying the administration was a necessary requisite to gain the esteem of the community. When Fr. Vaughan returned to Clare in 1866 to be denounced for his courtship of Fenianism by Cardinal Cullen, bonfires blazed in his parish welcoming the 'man of the people'.¹³⁰ Some years later, the acquittal of Constable Stevenson at a

¹²⁷ The author could find information on the activities concerning some of these rebellious priests (and the events surrounding their dismissal, removal, or condemnation by the hierarchy) in the Dublin Diocesan Archives, Holy Cross College, Clonliffe Road, Dublin, or in the Diocesan Archives, in Westbourne, Ennis.

¹²⁸ Michael Hicks Beech, leader of the Conservative party, enforcer of the Coercion Act during Plan of Campaign.

¹²⁹ Gloucester Archives, D2455/PCC/45, A newspaper clipping found in the letters of Michael Hick's Beech, reveals the problems which Buller's visit (and his growing sympathies for the Kerry and Clare tenantry) was causing for both the administration and his appointee, Beech. It remarked 'I cannot conceive why he was sent over. It is emotional Englishmen who play the devil with this unfortunate country. His is a very nice, unassuming fellow in manner, but he has fallen into the hands of a – a noted Fenian, and his head is stuffed with nonsense. He fancies himself a Lord High Protector.....He was asked whether the Land League was still any considerable hold on the people? He said – certainly it has, and why should it not? It was the salvation of the people until the League arose, there was nobody to protect them. There was law, but it was only on one side. There was no law for them'.

¹³⁰ Fenian Papers, F Series, Box Two, F2204.

Constabulary Inquiry in Tulla, ‘received much satisfaction’ in the vicinity where he was ‘greatly respected’.¹³¹

What motivated the political involvement of police and priests? Their social background undoubtedly influenced their involvement in the agrarian issue. Through their support of land campaigns in the post-famine period, these men ‘reflected and in turn reflected back upon, the values of those from whom they had sprung’.¹³² From the 1850s onwards the clergy were increasingly drawn from the middle ranks of the farming class, were native to Clare, and because of this were often embroiled in the land issue. Furthermore, a sizeable number of the clergy were themselves farm holders, which meant that many found it impossible to depart from something which affected their interests.¹³³ In 1855, the Fenian sympathiser Rev. Jeremiah Vaughan appears to have owned eighteen acres of land and rented seventy-three from Bryan O’Loughlen (MP in 1877) in Ruan.¹³⁴ A half century later, it was evident that many of the clergy were still engaged in farming activities. Although census statistics do not give an estimate of the land owned, many of the clergy had an average of two servants and as many as eight out-offices or buildings on their premises, which accommodated fowl, calves, turf, cows, horses and pigs. The clergy for the most part came from a prosperous class of traders and (in the Clare case it appears that most were farmers) and it seems that the RIC, by the late nineteenth century, also came to attract a farming element.¹³⁵ Of one hundred members of the RIC based in Clare in the year 1865, twenty were

¹³¹ *LL*, 14 March 1898.

¹³² Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland*, p. 182.

¹³³ *CJ*, 5 July 1883, 2 February 1885; *CI*, 12 December 1877;

¹³⁴ *Griffith’s Valuation*, Ruan, Kilkee East. Vaughan later threatened to evict Rev R Fitzgerald, PP, Dysert, and Fitzgerald afterwards denounced Vaughan from the pulpit, denouncing the latter for in charging exorbitant rent. Fitzgerald’s actions were perhaps with an ulterior motive in view; and during his denunciations from the pulpit he warned the congregation not to consider buying his holding. *CI*, 12 December 1877.

¹³⁵ Diocesan Archives, Westbourne, Ennis, ‘Names, occupation and background of the clergy (listed A-Z) who administered in Clare between 1800 and 1900’. Finding the occupational backgrounds of the clergy in Clare was difficult – since very little information is available on the subject. However, for those few clerics whose backgrounds are mentioned it appears that they came from a respectable background and the reports seemed keen to stress this. While there are instances of some clerics coming from less affluent backgrounds, these seem to have been the exception and not the rule. Those financial issues were often a barrier to obtaining the clerical training of many was evident in the case of Denis O’Brien, a native of Tipperary who was ordained in Maynooth in 1874. His family were small farmers and to put him through college three brothers and two sisters went to the states, leaving only their mother in the place. It was therefore quite difficult for most of this class to enter the seminary (generally in Maynooth, but also Paris), and rather, those who joined the priesthood generally were of a comfortable class, and were sons of merchants, sons of ‘extensive farmers’, and prosperous traders. While only some of the clergy’s backgrounds were listed, for those that were available, most came from the farming sector.

farmers before they joined the force, fifty were labourers (mostly agricultural labourers), ten had no occupation and the remainder consisted of artisans such as shoemakers and cart makers.¹³⁶ However, by the late nineteenth century members of the constabulary force were increasingly drawn from a farming background. Of the sixty-seven barracks and 387 police constables traced on the 1901 census for Clare, 180 were (non-inheriting) sons of farmers, fifty-one were listed with no occupation, thirty-seven were farmers, eleven were scholars, eight were seamen, three were teachers, and amongst them was also a very small sprinkling of artisans (one blacksmith, one tailor) and retailers' assistants (three draper's assistants and six shop assistants).¹³⁷

The increasing recruitment of men of a young age into both clergy and police during times of heightened political activity contributed to political indiscipline. According to available census statistics these men, both RIC and Clergy generally fell within the age cohort twenty-five to forty years in the period 1871 to 1891.¹³⁸ During the construction of the O'Connell monument in Ennis, the enthusiastic younger clergy were determined to outstrip the older generation on the political scene:

whatever enthusiasm the old guards the priests, who fought and conquered with O'Connell, may exhibit, the younger clergy, who have since been associated with them in the ministry, will, if possible, outstrip them in devoted ardour, in determined energy and in enthusiastic cooperation...¹³⁹

Older figureheads responsible for the monument's construction, including the Dean Kenny of Ennis, were relics of an older regime who were all but replaced by politically active priests in their thirties (almost half his age) at the unveiling of the O'Connell monument in 1860. Though not as much for political motives as in the case of the clergy, but more through youthful indiscipline and material grievances many of these constables were disposed to manifest nationalist sympathies. Of one hundred constables analysed in the years 1865 to 1867 approximately two-thirds (or almost seventy per

¹³⁶ Home Office Papers, National Archives Kew, 184, Microfilm Reels, 17-19.

¹³⁷ Census of Ireland 1901, County Clare

¹³⁸ Clarkson, L.A. et al. *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations, 1831-1911* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], December 1997. SN: 3495. Census statistics are incomplete, but in 1871, the greatest number of clergy (or twenty-six per cent) and RIC men (also twenty-six per cent) occupied the 25 to 34 year age group. In 1881, fifty-two percent of the clergy and fifty per cent of the RIC occupied the 25-44 year age cohort. The same was apparent a decade later in 1891, when fifty-six per cent of the clergy and sixty-nine per cent of the RIC were between 25 to 44 years.

¹³⁹ *CJ*, 24 March 1859.

cent) were under the ages of twenty-three, single and in many instances, with the youthful arrogance tended to breed disobedience.¹⁴⁰ One constable had perhaps become all too familiar with the youthful indiscipline in the force, when he casually remarked that; ‘generally speaking, a man errs in his young days’.¹⁴¹

Priests and police who were from the county itself tended to show a greater disposition to become involved in political issues. The authorities, conscious of this, made attempts to make sure that these local administrators had no links or connections with those in the counties they were stationed. This appears to have been effective in the case of the RIC, who, by the early twentieth century, were complete outsiders to the local community, something that had the effect of reducing their involvement in political activities which were often rooted in local ties and familial affiliations. On the other hand, by the early twentieth century, most the clergy stationed in Clare were from the county and their involvement in political issues was sometimes determined by such local ties.¹⁴² Fr. White parish priest of Miltown Malbay came from the village of Tulla, where his brother (a grocer), was convicted of conspiracy to boycott in December 1887.¹⁴³ Perhaps it was a coincidence, but the incident occurred at the same time that a number of men were implicated for organising a concerted boycotting campaign in Miltown Malbay in which Fr. White became deeply involved (and allegedly actively encouraged).¹⁴⁴ Constables also tended to be more deeply involved in political issues if they were from the area. In instances where they were from the region where they administered, friendships with politically active individuals were retained - existing correspondence between Fenian James Conway to Michael Naughton in Feakle barracks (both of whom were from the area), discussed Home Rule, Fenianism and the upcoming elections.¹⁴⁵ The appointment of men from outside the community had the effect of severing such local ties with the population, making the work of the authorities

¹⁴⁰ Home Office Papers, National Archives Kew, 184, Microfilm Reels, 17-19.

¹⁴¹ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, p. 111.

¹⁴² Diocesan Archives, Westbourne, Ennis, ‘Names, occupation and background of the clergy (listed A-Z) who administered in Clare between 1800 and 1900’. Taken from an analysis of 160 priests stationed in the county between 1850-1900 it appears that 109 came from Clare, forty from Tipperary, with some also from Cork (1), Laois (2), Leitrim (1), Limerick (3), Offaly, (3) and Waterford (1). See also, Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe 1850-1904*, p. 450-470.

¹⁴³ CO903/2 p. 21.

¹⁴⁴ *CJ*, 15, 19 December 1887; 16 January, 23 February, 21 June 1888.

¹⁴⁵ Fenian Papers, Box Nine, No 4927R, 8 November 1869.

more effective and serving to cut them off from their immersion in local political campaigns.

Memories of a not too distant nationalist past motivated many of these men's political outlooks. Members of the clergy who were sympathetic to popular movements were influenced by their experience of the past. A native of the county, the Rev Kenny's apparent sympathies with the Fenian rebels was influenced by his own experience of past insurrection and the 'memorable year of '98...when from his own knowledge, many of the most innocent persons were prosecuted and executed without the slightest cause'.¹⁴⁶ Constable Sweeney, who resigned in protest against the arrest of a Bruff priest in 1887, recounted that he was also influenced by his strong nationalist links with the past: 'His father was distinguished as a nationalist during the repeal agitation under the leadership of O'Connell, and his grandsire proved that he loved his native land in '98'. Sweeney hailed from Sligo, which he described as 'a centre of orangeism' and this regional background obviously proved a factor in colouring his nationalism with a strong denominationalism. Whilst recounting the events which led to his resignation, Sweeney stated; 'I have done nothing but what any many of good Catholic faith would have done (hear, hear) and what many with a spark of nationality and patriotism would have done'.¹⁴⁷

Economic interests determined some of the clergy's support for nationalist causes, especially during periods of agricultural depression and decline. The economic dependence of many priests on their parishioners shaped their response to popular politics. In the 1860s, Fr. P. Byrnes of New Quay, North Clare, complained to Archbishop Cullen that a series of bad harvests had reduced the priest's condition immeasurably. His 'receipts last Easter were lessened by nearly half at least and they were very small since then'. Members of the clergy were 'considerably in debt' and 'consequently the priests condition is always dependent on the people which', he added, 'must indeed, be miserable'.¹⁴⁸

Such economic considerations possibly encouraged many of the clergy to support or at least tolerate Fenianism in the 1860s. Church building, accelerated in the county in the

¹⁴⁶ *CJ*, 18 March 1867.

¹⁴⁷ *MN*, 9, 16 April 1887.

¹⁴⁸ Dublin Diocesan Papers, Secular Priests, 1862, 340/4/100.

wake of Catholic Emancipation, must have been a factor in encouraging many of the clergy's enthusiastic identification with political causes since they needed to retain popular support in order to finance their building projects.¹⁴⁹ Half a century later, it was these economic concerns again that motivated the clergy's support of republicanism in the period immediately after the 1916 rising. As Fitzpatrick has found in the case of Clare in 1916, 'priests in leaking churches simply could not afford to fight unpopular causes...it was a happy coincidence that the rising excited many of the priests as much as their parishioners'.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, in the 1860s, Fr. Vaughan's eccentric support of Fenianism could have been perhaps primarily encouraged by his need for money to construct a church in Doora.¹⁵¹ One wonders if there was any method to the madness which was ascribed to the cleric's actions in 1866, when he left for America to lecture to 'Fenian audiences' on the 'Famine in Ireland'.¹⁵² Similar motivations perhaps also underpinned Fr. Patrick White's support for Fenianism in 1867. One of those transported after the rising, Thomas McCarthy Fennell, (who afterwards went on to become a prosperous businessman and politician in New York), raised a 'considerable amount' of money for the construction of a church in the cleric's parish in 1900.¹⁵³ Those priests that did not support popular causes were faced with the consequences. Clergy who refused to say masses for the Manchester Martyrs in late 1867 faced considerable difficulty in the neighbouring diocese of Tuam, where their parishioners threatened to deprive them of supplies should their requests for masses be ignored.¹⁵⁴ Whether it was for economic reasons or simply for 'peace sake', many of the clergy in Clare found it necessary to restrain their opinions and capitulate to their parishioners demands.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ MacLochlainn, 'Social Life in Clare 1800 – 1850', p. 66. Approximately sixty nine churches were built between 1826 and 1850, which witnessed, as Murphy has shown 'the first phase of church building'. Thereafter, the second phase of church expansion in the 1850s and 1860s, witnessed mainly the interior decorating and furnishing of these churches. Ignatius Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe 1800-1850* (Dublin, 1992) pp 282, 330.

¹⁵⁰ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 118.

¹⁵¹ The church was constructed by 1871, and was celebrated by the staging of a meeting at which Fr. Patrick Lavelle; the pro-Fenian priest attended, *CJ*, 13 July 1871.

¹⁵² *Irish People* (NY), 26 May, 8 December 1866.

¹⁵³ http://www.aoh61.com/history/kilbaha_1867.htm Matthew Birmingham, 'The Fenian Rising in Kilbaha', (accessed 3.1.2011).

¹⁵⁴ Dublin Diocesan Papers, Cullen Papers, 1867, 'Bishops Irish' 334/4/1, Bishop McEvilly to Cullen

¹⁵⁵ Oliver Rafferty, *The Church the State and the Fenian Threat* (London, 1999) p. 104.

This was particularly apparent in 1879, when the onset of a severe economic depression motivated much clerical support of the Land League. In the previous decade, some clergy, at least, had managed to accrue large sums from the increasingly affluent tenant class. A letter to Archbishop Cullen complaining of the exorbitant dues charged by the clergy in west Clare in 1875 shows the prosperous position of the clergy and the comfortable tenant farmers and traders, two groups prominent in the Land League and whom the clergy could not afford to alienate. In west Clare, the Sacrament of Extreme Unction (Last Rites) was administered for seven shillings and sixpence; Marriage was valued at six pounds, Confession at house stations at seven shillings and sixpence, and masses said for the family at between five shillings and seven shillings and sixpence. In some instances the clergy 'are so conscientious as not to charge for baptism but only for churching (blessing of mother after the child [was] born), but others do for the sacrament'.¹⁵⁶

This letter highlights the close ties with the rising farming class which existed at this time, and the gulf with the poorer classes. Most of these dues came down heavily on the poorer class as many of the dues and rites administered were the equivalent and sometimes more than an agricultural labourer's weekly wage.¹⁵⁷ A local clergyman complained that one 'poor man' managed to make a collection of four of the seven shillings needed to administer the Last Rites, but was 'obliged to pay the [remainder] ...before the sacrament was administered'. A widow's daughter, who managed to borrow four pounds for a marriage, had to raise an additional two pounds before she was facilitated in marrying a man 'who had not a penny'.¹⁵⁸ These observances were also noted some years later in Killaloe, where the local priest was alleged to have charged one pound for funeral services, much to the neglect of the interests of the poor,

¹⁵⁶ Dublin Diocesan Papers, Laity July -December 1875, 322/2/27 Fr. W.F. Hartney Kilkee, Clare, to Cullen re alleged simony.

¹⁵⁷ Dublin Diocesan Papers, Laity July-December 1875, 322/2/27 Fr. W.F. Hartney Kilkee, Clare, to Cullen re alleged simony; Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society*, p. 99-100. An agricultural labourer's daily wage in Clare in 1870 was one shilling two pence per day, while seven days work equated to 8 shillings one pence. *Reports from Poor Law Inspectors on the wages of Agricultural Labourers in Ireland*, H.C., 1870, XIV.1, p. 20.

¹⁵⁸ Dublin Diocesan Papers, Laity July-December 1875, 322/2/27 Fr. W.F. Hartney Kilkee, Clare, to Cullen re alleged simony.

who (without the necessary funds) were believed to have buried their relatives and family without any services.¹⁵⁹

These dues which the clergy had managed to obtain in the 1870s were facilitated by the economic boom that was apparent in both town and countryside. However, the decline in prosperity which accompanied the economic depression of the late 1870s meant that many of the clergy were in a precarious position. Bishops and priests 'whose incomes (like those of the farmers, fell as a result of agricultural depression) briskly decided that their own best interests lay in movement rather than repose'.¹⁶⁰ While many of the clergy had initially denounced or disagreed with the Land League, many had to re-evaluate their initial opinions and join the League or face financial difficulty.¹⁶¹ The tenant farmers and traders who composed the membership of the Land League were the clergy's guarantors and many were quite conscious of this fact. Following the actions of local priest Fr. Loughnane, who resigned (because of his obviously conflicting political opinions) at one of the initial meetings of the Land League in Ennis, one man piped up that 'the priests lived a life of ease and comfort, and the farmers paid them. He would be inclined not to pay them anymore'.¹⁶² It was clear when Loughnane returned to the movement much later on, that he was conscious of the need to go with the people and prosper, or go against and suffer.¹⁶³

The RIC's defections to and sympathies with nationalist political movements, too, occurred during periods of economic insecurity within the police force. Many members of the RIC who resigned during the Fenian outbreak left as a result of practical grievances ranging from poor pay, poor housing conditions and exasperation with the government's failure to meet their growing demands for improvements in these areas.¹⁶⁴ The RIC's main grievance throughout the late nineteenth century was monetary. In

¹⁵⁹ *CJ*, 24 March 1904.

¹⁶⁰ Hoppen, *Conflict and Conformity*, p. 176.

¹⁶¹ Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society*, p. 242.

¹⁶² *CI*, 24 July 1880. A different version of the meeting featured in the *Clare Examiner*, where it was reported that at the meeting a farmer from Newmarket on Fergus stated, 'if the priests did not support the people, they ought not get a shilling, as they had been for hundreds of years supported in idleness'. Here members enthusiastically agreed with such views, and another member of the branch, Mr. E.P. Slattery concurred, 'if the priests and press deserted the League they would be left to themselves'. *Clare Examiner*, 24 July 1880. Despite such conflicting accounts however, both news reports testified to the growing indignation with members of the clergy who chose not to participate in the Land League.

¹⁶³ *CI*, 21 February, 4 April 1885.

¹⁶⁴ *CJ*, 22 July 1867.

response to a constable in Kildysart, west Clare resigning due to the ‘inadequate pay of the police’ the *Clare Journal* stated, ‘it is feared that many other members of this respectable and efficient body, will, ere long imitate his example, unless the government adopt immediate measures to ameliorate their condition’.¹⁶⁵ Between 1865 and 1867 nearly sixty per cent of one hundred constables stationed in the county, left after a period of two to three years in order to ‘better their conditions’ or ‘to be with family and friends’ although the majority appear to have chosen emigration and bettered their conditions immeasurably by seeking a more remunerative form of employment abroad.¹⁶⁶ As a result of this growing disillusionment with government treatment, or perhaps out of genuine sympathy for the rebels, some members of the RIC joined or facilitated the Fenian movement in 1867.¹⁶⁷

Similarly, the defections and support which policemen showed towards nationalist campaigns within the police which occurred in the 1880s, was at a time which was marked by much economic instability. Staged during a time of intense political agitation, the RIC’s strike occurred in 1883 and members of the constabulary in Ennis and those throughout the county submitted a long list of demands, the most important of which was an increase in pay.¹⁶⁸ Similar to their counterparts in India, while such instances strikes, resignations and other forms of police protest which occurred at a time when loyalty to the government was most crucial, was interpreted as subversive; members of the constabulary for the most part supported the strike as a purely economic tactic to make the government capitulate to their demands.¹⁶⁹ Following the passage of the Irish Constabulary Bill, which granted many concessions to the RIC and made Irish

¹⁶⁵ *CJ*, 9 April 1866.

¹⁶⁶ Home Office Papers, 184, Reel 17-19, Report on RIC stationed in Clare 1865-1867.

¹⁶⁷ Local Studies, Ennis, Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 174, Cluain Aodha, Baile an Luadhain, Seán Ó Seanacháin, p. 164; CSO/ICR/S, 1865-1867, p.539; *CJ*, 15 March 1866; Fenian Papers, Box Nine, R Series, No 4927R; *CJ*, 15 March 1866; Fenian Papers, Box Nine, R Series, No 4927R; Fenian Papers, Box Four, F Series, 3459.

¹⁶⁸ Demands made by the Clare RIC included: the abolition of unfavourable records, lodging allowance for married men (those living outside the barrack) more provisions, including boots, spurs, guns, and clothing, optional retirement after twenty five years service and compulsory at thirty years, the abolition of sections of the code which punished the actions of senior constables for the actions of juniors when on duty, the establishment of a school for orphan children of the force and also, that the men of the force who joined since 1886 should be put on the same equality respecting pensions than those who joined previous to that date. For more see, *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, pp 386-393; Malcolm, *Irish Policeman*, p. 154.

¹⁶⁹ Lata Singh, ‘Locating the Bihar Constabulary, 1920-1922: An exploration into the margins of resistance’, *Social Scientist* (2002) p. 67; W.J. Lowe, ‘The Constabulary Agitation of 1882’, *Irish Historical Studies* (May, 1998) p. 58.

policing a far more attractive career, some members of the force continued to identify themselves with nationalist movement afterwards, but these men became the exceptions and not the rule.¹⁷⁰

In many instances then, police and clerical courtship of provincial nationalism and local popularity was motivated by economic concerns and by influences in the individual's own background. But such political attitudes can also be seen as a response to the increasingly politicised environment in which priests and people lived. Clerical and police courtship of provincial nationalism was thus part of an increasing tendency to bend to the wishes of an increasingly politicised laity.¹⁷¹ This was not an unfamiliar situation. In late eighteenth century America, the growing familiarisation of the lay population with republicanism meant that many of the clergy (in spite of their own and the hierarchy's diverging political ideas) had to countenance the republican ethos of their parishioners.¹⁷² At various periods of popular unrest, there was evidence that these local authority figures often had to succumb to the growing political opinion of rural and village inhabitants, or face the consequences.

This was particularly apparent even at the onset of Fenianism in the county, which witnessed a growing public indignation with the clergy when it came to political matters. A Fenian in Miltown Malbay who had approached the local priest to ask for his blessing before the rising was refused and, in response, remarked with indifference that he would do better without it.¹⁷³ The situation escalated when the cleric provided information to the police and a large number of parishioners evinced hostility towards the priest with the result that a Jesuit missionary was sent upon to restore order.¹⁷⁴ A similar 'revolt' against the clergy by Fenian supporters who favoured the leadership of the religious orders over that of the secular clergy occurred in Galway.¹⁷⁵ Increasing nationalist politicisation was accompanied by an increasingly strong popular dislike of authority and the administration. This was also evident in the case of policemen.

¹⁷⁰ Lowe, 'Constabulary Agitation of 1882', p. 58.

¹⁷¹ Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society*, p. 242.

¹⁷² Patrick W. Carey, 'Republicanism within American Catholicism, 1785-1860', *Journal of the Early Republic* (1983) p. 424.

¹⁷³ Fenian Papers, Box Four, F3693.

¹⁷⁴ Mathuin McFheorais and Eva O' Cathaoir, 'The Irish Republican Brotherhood in Clare, 1858-1871', In Matthew Lynch and Patrick Nugent (eds), *Clare History and Society* (Dublin, 2008) p. 471.

¹⁷⁵ Dublin Diocesan Papers, Cullen Papers, 1867, 'Bishops Irish' 334/4/1, Bishop McEvelly to Cullen

Members who left the RIC and defected to the Fenian movement earned popular folk status that lasted until the mid-twentieth century.¹⁷⁶ From fear of popular reprisal, other retired men were reluctant to facilitate the law despite having served in the police force. Even a recently discharged constable in Corofin, who had opened a shop, refused to provide the authorities with any information of Fenian activity, because he feared 'his business just begun will be ruined'.¹⁷⁷

When Home Rule and the Land League became popularised in the late 1870s, those clergy opposed to it were shown increased hostility by the local community. Despite the clergy's opposition, rural crowds declared themselves firmly in support of Home Rule in the contest for a county member in 1877, when the O'Gorman Mahon (Home Rule) was pitted against the clerically favoured Bryan O'Loughlen (Liberal). The opposition to O'Gorman Mahon by the clergy was criticised at parish level throughout the county areas where it resulted in a 'battle between priests and people'.¹⁷⁸ The growing economic distress served to spur collective mobilisation in rural areas where inhabitants began to assert their electoral freedom: crowds were heard to shout the Fenian slogan, 'no priests in politics' while 'holy war' resulted in western areas where individuals whipped up political conflict.¹⁷⁹ In Kilrush, an 'unusual' element was reported to have crept into the struggle in 'Catholic Clare' and a 'regular cross firing' of political debate was engaged in at Kilrush church between the priest Rev. Thomas O'Meara, and supporters of O'Gorman Mahon:

A strife and bad feeling existed, a fitting type of communistic display. Men were seen leaving the house of God during holy mass; men were publicly declaring a war against priests on the platforms and the streets. The temperance bands, raised by the priests and people, for laudable purposes, were used for illicit objects, especially in attracting crowds before the priests house on Sunday evening to groan them.¹⁸⁰

Support for popular politics was also evident in the towns where, despite the clergy nominating Catholic liberal William O'Brien as candidate, the Parnellite candidate

¹⁷⁶ Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 174, Cluain Aodha, Baile an Luadhain, Seán Ó Seanacháin, p. 164.

¹⁷⁷ Fenian Papers, Box Four, 3675F.

¹⁷⁸ *CI*, 18 August 1877.

¹⁷⁹ Sheedy, *Clare Elections*, p. 254; *CJ*, 15 August 1877.

¹⁸⁰ *CI*, 17 August 1877.

Lysaght Finegan received an overall majority.¹⁸¹ It was evident that the voters expected their clergy to side with them when it came to political matters and receive their support, or go against them and do without it. Pamphlets circulated in the town issued by an 'Irish priest' calling on the people of the town of Ennis to 'disregard' the opinions of the clergy of Ennis who should have 'given you good advice' or 'left you to guidance of your own patriotism'.¹⁸²

While the priests continued their opposition to branches of the Land League being established locally, they were met with strong hostility in both town and countryside. On political platforms they were condemned for their conservative opinions. A member of the clergy (and president of the branch) was booed from the political platform in Scariff after crowds were told (by a newspaper proprietor) 'you are not bound to take your politics from any archbishop'.¹⁸³ In Corofin, the local population staged a miniature revolt against their cleric after he denounced a meeting of the Land League from the altar. His condemnation of the League and its organisers, had the 'contrary effect to that intended' and served to 'excite the promoters of it to more vigorous action'. The meeting, showed how popular hostility could be directed at those clerics who failed to follow the political stance of their parishioners and during the proceedings, crowds assembled outside the parochial house, which was decorated with a Land League banner, giving 'enthusiastic cheers' for the chief organisers, 'but groans were given for the local priests'.¹⁸⁴ Members of the police force were also subjected to what they called the 'unwritten law' of the local community, for the stance they took in enforcing evictions and protecting the interests of the landlords during the agitation. Constables were boycotted, denied provisions and became the object of local enmity - something which was evident in local and popular song.¹⁸⁵ Funerals of RIC men, which were often the means through which constables assessed popular feelings towards the force in general, were, in the land agitation, very poorly attended and showed very little

¹⁸¹ *CI*, 3, 10 April 1880.

¹⁸² An Irish Priest, *A letter to the people of Ennis* (no publisher, 1879), National Library of Ireland, catalogue no. Ir 94108 p2.

¹⁸³ *CI*, 23 October 1880.

¹⁸⁴ *CI*, 4 December 1880; *Times*, 30 November 1880.

¹⁸⁵ T.S. Clery, *Songs of the Irish Land War* (Dublin, 1888); *CJ*, 25 September 1882; *CI*, 16 April 1881. Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 180, Moyasta, Kilkee, P. D. Priodargas, p. 174; Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 181, Carrigaholt, Carraig an Chabhaltaigh, Brid Bean Uí Cathain, p. 265; Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 180, Shanavough, Miltown Malbay, Cill Muire, Mairtin O Criochain, p. 9.

indication of sympathy from the local population.¹⁸⁶ Such hostility evident among the local population often escalated into aggression, the constabulary often clashed with crowds at political demonstrations, meetings and evictions at this time, while members of the clergy were also the object of popular animosity: ricks of hay were maliciously burnt on a cleric's land and in Ennis an objectionable cleric was met with the call 'give him [the priest] plenty of buckshot!'¹⁸⁷

Perhaps it was easier then, for these figures of authority to succumb to rising popular political opinion. The celebration of a mass for the Manchester Martyrs by the Augustinian Friars in Galway 'without referring' to Bishop McEvilly succeeded in putting the Catholic leader in a 'very false position with a very large mass of the deluded sympathisers'.¹⁸⁸ In the interest of keeping the peace he permitted masses for the Manchester Martyrs in Ennistymon because 'all the young men in the area, as well as the women and girls, were red hot Fenians'.¹⁸⁹ While the RIC were perhaps less inclined to succumb to the whims of the population some instances determined that it would be wiser; at the unveiling of the Manchester Martyr Monument in Ennis, members of the RIC yielded to the crowds demands and took off their helmets as a mark and acknowledgement of respect.¹⁹⁰ Most of the clergy however increasingly, found it necessary to follow their parishioners' line on political matters and despite their initial objections, found it necessary to 'go with the people' during the Land League.¹⁹¹ This marriage of convenience certainly did not see an end to clerical and lay conflict over party and political matters and as the nineteenth century progressed, the balance of power between priests and people shifted, and clerical leaders came to be increasingly identified as 'adjutants, not generals'.¹⁹² The 'authority of the clergy, once all powerful, was openly defied' by excited crowds in Ennis following the party 'split' in 1891, when a 'prominent clergyman' (name not given) approached the excited crowds of Parnellites and shouted 'let us give a cheer for Parnell now. He was then respectfully listened to,

¹⁸⁶ CO903/3, p.7; *CJ*, 19 September 1887.

¹⁸⁷ *CI*, 30 August 1881. Claim for compensation at Clare Assizes; Rev J Carr, PP, 15 pounds 10s, hay maliciously burned and two gate piers maliciously thrown down. *CJ*, 5 July 1883.

¹⁸⁸ Dublin Diocesan Papers, Cullen Papers, 1867, 'Bishops Irish' 334/4/1, Bishop McEvilly to Cullen

¹⁸⁹ Rafferty, *The Church the State and the Fenian Threat*, p. 104.

¹⁹⁰ *MN*, 1 December 1886; *CJ*, 2 December 1886.

¹⁹¹ Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society*, p. 242.

¹⁹² Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p.76.

and there was no further breach of the peace'.¹⁹³ In the early twentieth century, to join popular causes was increasingly becoming a necessity and not an option. When the Rev Fr. Gurran attended a UIL meeting in Ennistymon, the county inspector stated he was 'surprised' to see him present after he had recently given information upon the perpetrators of an agrarian outrage in the district. McGurran's support for the UIL was a requisite to evade hostility for his collusion with the law, 'I understand he is very much disappointed and indignant at the release on bail of the accused and considers himself very much aggrieved having regard to all he said and wrote on the subject at the beginning'.¹⁹⁴

On closer inspection, it was apparent that both the clergy and the police's political credentials were dubious. While some of the clergy and the RIC's political views were genuine, motivated in part by their background, and their links and memories of the past, for the most part their political radicalism was more rhetorical than real. Nonetheless, their role in championing radical nationalist causes, however questionable, reinforced the political views of the community. This chapter has perhaps shed more light on the emerging political views of the local population than of the clergy and the police. The latter's views were an attempt to conciliate the viewpoints of an increasingly politicised rural and urban populace, and while the RIC were perhaps more sturdy and less prone to influence, the clergy were more obliged to go with the political whims of their parishioners or else lose their influence. These clerical fears of loss of authority were perhaps becoming all the more real in the 1860s, with the rise of groups like the IRB and its individual members who, as the next chapter will discuss, rivalled the authority of the clergy locally and exercised an even greater influence on radical nationalist opinion locally.

¹⁹³ *CJ*, 17 December 1891.

¹⁹⁴ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 17 May 1901, 24554/S; CO904/73, Reel 39, 'RIC Inspector General's and County Inspectors Monthly Confidential Reports', September 1901.

Chapter Five: The role of individuals in popular politicisation

A small but influential group of local individuals were central to shaping radical political views in Clare. In a county that was to a large extent physically isolated from the rest of the country, such individuals were vital transmitters of nationalist ideas to the population, especially in the rural and more remote areas. In the late nineteenth century, and in the early years of the twentieth century, national leaders and MPs only infrequently visited the county (especially at election time), their trips, as one historian commented, being ‘ceremonial’ occasions.¹ Outside these ceremonial visits, it was the duty of local individuals to step into the position of leadership to bring these national political ideas and policies and link Clare with the broader national scene. Three categories of influential local individual stand out in the context of Clare politicisation in the half-century after 1860, categories that do overlap but can still be discussed separately from one another – influential local men (usually though not always active in public life), returned Americans (most politically active), and women (especially mothers).

Influential local men:

These were mostly part of the post-famine generation of young men, coming from below – i.e. from within the ranks of the general population, but whose well-developed political ideas separated them from the rest of the population. Their political opinions were strongly influenced by their own personal experiences and by a romanticised view of events from the past, and they were strongly motivated to spread advanced nationalist opinions among those they associated with.

Some of these men were prominent because of their position as local retailers, with a consequent network communication with other local businesses and with the general population, and they combined this with membership of more than one political

¹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 73.

organisation. One such man was Thomas Nagle, baker (and later master baker) of Kiltrush, member of the Land League and later of the United Irish League, who publicised his advanced nationalist sympathies by masterminding the erection of a Manchester Martyrs monument in Shanakyle graveyard in Kiltrush in the 1880s, effectively linking the political attitudes of the present with memories of the past, since the graveyard was once the scene of ‘coffin-less graves’ during the famine.² Through his speech on the occasion, Nagle and other individuals served to remind others of these events and their relevance to the current political struggle. He spelt out to the crowds present that the ‘felons of ’67’ like the dead of ’47, were being equally ‘victimised under foreign rule’.³ The public meeting or commemoration provided the perfect setting for such individuals to use their own reputations to evangelise the population at large: Bryan Clune, another local with a network of connections *via* his political involvement, and part of that post-famine generation, told crowds who assembled to hear his speech in Ennis that, Ireland, finds ‘her agriculture and her commerce labour under ceaseless depression, and her children fly from her famine stricken shores, or remain among the snares of her British masters to receive a beggars dole from the charity of the world - centuries of depression and misgovernment have produced these sad results’.⁴ Again and again, prominent local men passed on these memories and attitudes to crowds in the 1880s, encouraging others to remember such events at a time when economic debt and poverty were the experiences of many.

Some local individuals who assumed a position of leadership were a cut above the population in terms of prosperity, someone to whom the crowd could look up. One such man was Edmund Bennett, who owned ninety acres of good land in Newmarket on Fergus. Unsurprisingly, given the role of big farmers in the land agitation generally, such men were pivotal in introducing the Land League into Clare and spreading support for the movement through the towns and villages. In the early years of the land campaign, before the clergy gave their support to the land agitation, its success

² Although the writer has been unable to find the cross, it was apparent (from newspaper reports) that moves were up and running in 1884 to have the monument constructed for 1885. It appears that it must have been built as planned, judging from the speech of J.M. Nagle at the unveiling of the Manchester Martyr Monument in Ennis in 1886, when he stated that ‘a little cross’ had recently been erected at Shanakyle to the memory of Allen, Larkin and O’Brien. *CI*, 6 December 1884; *MN*, 1 December 1886, *CJ*, 2 December 1886.

³ *CI*, 6 December 1884.

⁴ *MN*, 12 June 1886.

primarily relied on these men, whose platform speeches rallied the crowds to keep up the campaign, explained the issues to those who did not understand, and stressed the importance of keeping the local effort closely linked to the central leadership. Such was the case in Newmarket-on-Fergus where Bennett reminded crowds ‘that in this movement they had the central executive in Dublin would extend to them aid in fighting for just principles’.⁵ Before the clergy were to become involved in the land campaign, such men were also vitally important in representing tenants in their locality. Bennett was amongst those who not only organised the Ballycar tenants in the early years of the Land League, but also assisted them in making representatives to their landlord, Studdert, in their demands for a ‘fair rent’ as outlined in Griffith’s Valuation.⁶ Bennet’s influence on the young men of the locality and his capacity to link agrarian and advanced nationalist issues was demonstrated when he oversaw the seizure of a number of cattle in Ennis and, headed by a gang of youths marching six deep, gave cheers for O’Donovan Rosa then engaged in the dynamite campaign in Britain.⁷ Another man who used his relative affluence and his prominence locally to propagate subversive views was John Malone, cattle dealer of Tulla who operated successfully in 1888 ‘as vigilance committee man for the boycotting of obnoxious persons at fairs’.⁸ Such a position was extremely important: in the late nineteenth century fairs developed into arenas for the spread of political views, and the enforcing of Land League edicts, so much so that a constable’s attendance at a fair became an important aspect of his job.⁹

Other men of influence were of far more humble origins, yet they used their work milieu for political evangelisation. One such man was secretary of the Ennis Trades, Michael Considine of High Street, Ennis.¹⁰ Older than many other politically influential

⁵ *CI*, 14 August 1880.

⁶ *CI*, 13 November 1880.

⁷ *Clare Independent*, 13 August 1881.

⁸ Colonial Office Papers (originals in National Archives Kew, Microfilm in Mary Immaculate College Library, cited hereafter as CO/904) 18, Reel 8, ‘Register of Suspects I-J’, John Malone, Tulla.

⁹ CBS 1903, 28288/S; Constable Patrick Lysaght visited fairs four times in one month, where he watched the movements of ‘suspects’.

¹⁰ M. G. Considine, shoemaker, became a popular political figure in the town of Ennis, when he was appointed secretary of the local Trades body, in 1850. As secretary of the Trades, it was apparent that Considine gained a place for himself in almost every political event. He was a popular leader at political rallies, including those organised by the Amnesty Movement and the Land League (in its initial years) as well as being responsible for the inauguration of two major nationalist public memorials – the O’Connell monument (1865) and Manchester Martyrs Monument (1886). *CI*, 23, 30 May, 1, 8 December 1877, 5, 16, 23, January, 2 February, 6 March 1878; *CF*, 22 June 1872; *CJ*, 6, 10 June 1872, 30 October, 6 November 1873, 2 January, 6 April 1878. *CI*, 11 April 1877.

locals (he could remember O’Connell’s campaigns), he was a well-read man, evidently self-taught, whose occupation facilitated his political involvement.¹¹ Due to the long working days and the sedentary nature of his work, the shoemaker would have had plenty of time to discuss issues with his customers. Such was evident in later oral accounts of the 1920s which recalled that the shoemaker was ‘always sitting on a chair, he had no need to move all day long and often into the night if he had a customer waiting’.¹² This, in addition to the fact that the shoemaker was without an overseer, granted him licence to discuss whatever issues arose in his head, without the concern of losing his job.¹³ Considine certainly exercised this freedom in the press over the course of several decades by writing endless letters to the editor regarding political issues, which led to his being accused by the local conservative press of having too much free rein.¹⁴ His influence seems to have been out of all proportion to his social position. He was reported to have exerted ‘power’ and influence over many of the townspeople’s political opinion, and any ‘candidate for that borough [Ennis] who neglected him would fare badly’.¹⁵ Despite his humble station, Considine exerted a strong influence over the population of Ennis and beyond. He lectured the people of the town in public buildings and in the workplace, and supplemented his trade by selling newspapers on his premises, which became an area for local discussion and opinion.¹⁶ Considine’s shop in High Street (at the top of the main street of the town) was ideally located, and it was where in 1858 he rallied crowds from atop a sugar barrel to initiate the construction of a monument in memory of Daniel O’Connell.¹⁷ Considine’s influence was evident from retrospective oral accounts and contemporary visual display – shops sold his portrait

¹¹ *CI*, 5 January 1878.

¹² Kieran Lillis, *Kieran Lillis remembers: Stories in the Life of Rural Ireland from the 20’s to the present day* (Kilmihil, 1994) p. 22.

¹³ E.J. Hobsbawn and Joan Wallach Scott, ‘Political Shoemakers’, p. 104.

¹⁴ *CJ*, 10 June 1872; *CF*, 22 June 1872.

¹⁵ *Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare County Election Petition; together with the proceedings of the Committee (1853)*, H.C. 1852 – 1853, IX, p. 155, 161; Bernard Becker, ‘Disturbed Clare, 1880’, p. 28.

¹⁶ Fenian Papers, Box 13, 6452R; *CJ*, 24 March 1859 (At the 1859 election for the borough, Considine addressed the people of Ennis from the windows of his house).

¹⁷ *CI*, 5 January 1878; *CF*, 8 July, 7 October 1865, *CJ*, 27 August 1860; *Griffith’s Primary Valuation of Tenements* (cited hereafter as *Griffith’s Valuation*), Ennis Union, p. 148; *Clare Election: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Clare County Election Petition; together with the proceedings of the Committee (1853)*, H.C. 1852-1853, IX, pp 127, 230. Michael Considine High Street, Ennis, valuation of property seven pounds, rent of property seven pounds per annum. Since Ennis was the polling centre for the county until 1852, the location of his premises beside the courthouse must have made it a busy hub of political discussion during parliamentary elections in which Considine, in his role as secretary of Trades, always played a conspicuous part.

and local song commemorated his role in the construction of the O'Connell monument. More significantly, he appears to have completely dominated the body known as the Ennis Trades whose role (only vaguely explained in the sources) seems to have been more as a political pressure group dedicated to preserving the memory of O'Connell than as a group of trade unions in the labour sense.¹⁸

Other members of the skilled artisan class of various urban centres in Clare, such as ironmongers, carpenters, and blacksmiths were equally conspicuous by their involvement in radical and political movements. Similar to the position of the shoemaker, the sociable nature of their occupations, and the frequency with which they came into contact with the local population meant that they were frequently the purveyors of news. Oral accounts from 1910 to 1930 recalled that on rainy days, when there was little work able to be done on the farm, the blacksmith attracted a number of people to the forge where he provided for their varied needs. Here, men went to get their horses shod and gates constructed for the farm while for the household, 'pot hooks for hanging pots over the fire, tongs to make the fire, brands to put under the griddle or oven, were all made in the forge'.¹⁹ As the customers waited in line conversations were struck up and, as Lillis recollected in the 1920s, 'the blacksmith was always busy and of course with a number of men always waiting for a job to be done the forge was the place to get all the local news and gossip'.²⁰ Because of the nature of the work, his premises often became the scene of heated political discussion. In Miltown Malbay, the blacksmith Maguire's forge was centrally located on a crossroad which was renamed 'Canada Cross' as a crowd assembled outside his forge during the planned Fenian invasion of Canada.²¹ Like the shoemaker, the blacksmith's knowledge of political and local affairs from his contact with a wide range of individuals granted him a superior status in the community. In the case of Maguire of Miltown Malbay, his importance as a purveyor of news and a political agitator continued to be highly regarded in the late

¹⁸ Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 175, Stiofán MacCluinn and Treasa MacChonmara, An Daingean, Quin, p. 289, Fenian Papers, Box Thirteen, 6452R. The picture represented him standing on a tub near the O'Connell monument in the square of the town, dressed in green, a cock red hat, and waving a flag.

¹⁹ Lillis, *Kieran Lillis remembers: Stories in the Life of Rural Ireland from the 20's to the present day*, p. 16; Aresnberg and Kimball, *Family and Community*, pp 253-254; IRA Witness Statements, Sean Moroney, Gurtavrulla, Feakle, Captain, Droomindoor Company Sixth Battalion, East Clare Brigade, BMH.WS14162

²⁰ Lillis, *Kieran Lillis remembers*, p. 16.

²¹ Seosamh MacMathuna, *Kilfarboy: A History of a West Clare Parish* (Miltown Malbay, 1976) p. 119.

nineteenth century as he was the one responsible for staging demonstrations in the town in response to the Franco-Prussian War and in protest at the eviction of local tenants during the land agitation of the 1880s.²²

These men, irrespective of their different backgrounds, shared political ideas at a time when such ideas were only beginning to germinate among the general population. They preached a new political ideology, and while not all were members of the IRB, all shared a distinctive nationalist political belief, a belief in some form of political independence and the use of force to achieve this if necessary. A number of them sought to impose these views on the populace by organising violent confrontations and resistance against the operation of the law locally. Though these local conflicts were frequently about local and economic issues like evictions, they were orchestrated by local leaders so as to fuse with a broader national political campaign, directing popular attention to the actions of the government in its treatment of the local populace. Individuals such as Patrick Slattery of Feakle in East Clare were responsible for mobilising violent agitation against the law during the land campaign. Recently returned from America, Slattery combined many roles: he was a farmer, member of the IRB, Land Leaguer and a newspaper correspondent, who was charged with being one of the ‘ring leaders’ connected with the Bodyke riot in 1881.²³ The riot was staged to resist the evictions of tenants on the O’Callaghan estate nearby, who were for the most part, holders of lands of ten to fifteen acres, most of them much further down the rural social ladder than Slattery himself.²⁴ One man died on the occasion, an incident which served to provoke widespread consternation throughout the country and even drew attention within the walls of Westminster. The incident, and Slattery’s role in it, served to direct popular attentions at the actions of the government, and shed light on political campaigns locally.

A similar role was played by James Halpin an IRB member and farmer of one hundred acres from Newmarket-on Fergus, who mobilised large crowds in Ennis in the summer of 1888 following Balfour’s comment in the House of Commons that the Land League

²² *CJ*, 9 March 1871, 20 February 1888.

²³ *CI*, 11 June 1881; CBS, Confidential B Files, (National Archives of Ireland), Shelf Number 3/716, No 67.

²⁴ *CI*, 4 June 1881.

in Clare ‘was a thing of the past’. The meeting ended in scenes of blood and violence with the arrest of seventy-four individuals (for a range of offences from wearing League cards to the more serious use of violence against the military). Halpin’s astuteness and influence were obvious in his upstaging of Michael Davitt and J.R. Cox. These had arrived in the town with the intention of speaking at the meeting, and Halpin used their absence - while they were pursued by the police - to take sole control of the political platform. Crowds were orchestrated to assemble in various points of the town in defiance of the authorities and an hour before Halpin’s arrest a crowd of three hundred had assembled in the square ‘groaning and shouting in a disorderly manner’. After the case, Halpin was escorted to the railway station which was ‘crowded with sympathisers’ and those convicted sang ‘God Save Ireland.’²⁵ Halpin, one of the first to be arrested, received three months and his imprisonment generated considerable public sympathy.²⁶ His use of these methods allowed him to garner local support for the Land League within Clare, and proved a stimulus in leading to subsequent violent confrontation with police and civilians at subsequent meetings through Clare.

Local leaders of this sort challenged the political system at ground level as well as the authority of both landlord and priest. All of these men, including those who were members of the IRB, were Catholic, but they openly disagreed with the clergy when it came to political matters. Their disputes with the clergy were well known in the localities in which they lived. In Carron, North Clare, Patrick Loughery despite being a devout Catholic was known to have been particularly detested by, and at odds with, the local clergy.²⁷ Others such as Patrick McInerney were prepared to stick to their political principles despite rumours circulating in the area that he was ‘not with his priest’ when he was arrested for IRB-related activities in 1884.²⁸ The clergy’s influence and dominance in local politics was challenged by McInerney, who later, alongside Bryan Clune, was one of those who orchestrated the activities of large crowds in Ennis against the clericalist anti-Parnellites. Stirred on by the speeches of both these men, crowds manifested a strong anti-clerical sentiment.²⁹ In Mill Street (an area associated with the

²⁵ *CJ*, 25 June 1888.

²⁶ *CJ*, 9, 16, 26, 30 April 1888; *MN*, 20 October 1888.

²⁷ IRA Witness Statements, John Joe Neylon (Tosser), BMH. WS1042.

²⁸ *CJ*, 14 May 1883.

²⁹ CO904/17, Reel 7, ‘Register of Suspects A-F’, Bryan Clune; *CJ*, 17 December 1891.

trades, artisan and working class, its streets and associated lanes having some of the lowest valuations in the town) the clergy were in for a particular onslaught and Father White, a man whose authority was 'heretofore unquestionable', was attacked by one Parnellite who asked: 'Why did you turn against the man who turned the first sod of the West Clare Railway for you', and another said "God forgive ye, if ye ever give them a shilling again at Christmas or Easter, I'll never support them again'.³⁰ According to the shocked account in the *Clare Journal*, 'the authority of the clergy, once all powerful, was openly defied by the excited crowd' and 'when the stone throwing early in the day commenced, the crowd seemed perfectly regardless of the consequences, whether lay or cleric was struck'.³¹

Landlord dominance in political campaigns was openly challenged by these popular leaders, some of them using their involvement in poor law boards as a means through which to rival landlord influence.³² Edmund Bennett of Ballycar in Newmarket-on-Fergus and Matthew Clune of Rylane in Clooney near Ennis, sought to replace the old landed elite with a new nationalist Catholic middle class. Bennett acquired chairmanship of the Board of Guardians in 1886, when unionist landlord Lord Inchiquin was removed from the board when he was away on a trip to the Punchestown races. Upon his return, he protested that he was 'legally the chairman of this board' yet left the room and later resigned.³³ Similar moves were in place to overthrow landlord dominance in Tulla, when Matthew Clune masterminded the removal of the Unionist Captain O'Callaghan from the Board in 1881.³⁴ These individuals were quick to consolidate their victory through the mobilisation of a broader section of the population – especially the young – in support of the new dispensation. Following Bennett's election as chairman of the Ennis Board of Guardians, for example, a Manchester Martyr procession was staged, led by the guardians who mobilised many young men

³⁰ *CJ*, 17 December 1891. *Griffith's Valuation*, Valuation of Tenements, Parish of Drumcliff, Ennis, Clare, p. 149.

³¹ *CJ*, 17 December 1891.

³² W.L Feingold, *The Revolt of the Tenantry: The Transformation of Local Government in Ireland, 1872-1886* (Boston, 1984) p. 118.

³³ *CJ*, 22 April 1886.

³⁴ *CJ*, 5 April 1883. Their prompt removal of landlord and Unionist O'Callaghan and others from the Board was in protest against the visit of the Chief Secretary to Ireland in 1881. William O'Brien, *Recollections* (London, 1905) p. 414

who were involved in the GAA.³⁵ In the Tulla Board of Guardians, a similar changing of the guard, combining the leadership of an individual and the mobilisation of broad support, was seen in the mid-1880s. Poor Law elections in the union became popular arenas where crowds often gathered to cheer on their respective nationalist candidates. In one instance, crowds of up to two thousand assembled outside, cheering for the candidate Patrick Loughery, of Crusheen, who was then serving a prison sentence for his complicity in the IRB. Perhaps out of fear or awe, five candidates resigned their membership of the Board in his favour.³⁶

Membership of the Poor Law Board was vitally important to the authority of such local leaders. Not only was it a sign that the local man had supplanted the landlord, but it gave the new leader power in matters that could win popular support. For instance, the 'new' Poor Law Guardians on the Tulla board championed the support of the labourers in the locality, who frequently assembled outside playing national airs when proposals for Labourers Cottages were being adopted.³⁷ Because of their political activity, by 1893 the Board had more labourers' cottages built than was the case in any other union in the county.³⁸ The building of these cottages was with a political end in view. Not only did it win support for the new board members, but because of the building of so many houses in the union, local landlords such as O'Callaghan Westropp were placed under considerable pressure since most of the cottages were built on his land.³⁹

Why did such men become involved in local politics and popular activism? Much of their motivation seems to have derived from a frustration with a lack of opportunity for speedy advancement, either political or economic. In the 1880s, men such as John Connors, Patrick Slattery, Thomas Gallagher and Bryan and Matthew Clune formed gangs in their respective localities to intimidate those paying rent during the land agitation.⁴⁰ Such gangs were as much about the need for camaraderie (as all of these

³⁵ *MN*, 1 December 1886, *CJ*, 2 December 1886.

³⁶ *CI*, 5 January 1884.

³⁷ *CI*, 16 February 1884, *LL*, 3 January 1900.

³⁸ *Labourers (Ireland) Acts (Cottages): Return showing the number of cottages built and authorised in Ireland under the Labourers Acts, 1893-1894, LXXV.69*, p. 4. Although the union of Limerick is in the county Clare, it has not been considered in the total 473 labourers cottages that were built in the union by 1893. The most of this 473 was built in Tulla,(134), Ennis, (123), Kildysert (53), Scariff, (35), Kilrush (31), Ennistymon, (27), Corofin (9), Gort (5) and Ballyvaughan (0).

³⁹ George Pellew, *In Castle and Cabin, or: Talks in Ireland in 1887* (London, 1888) p. 182.

⁴⁰ CSORP. 1882. 32122. 13 March 1881.

men were old Fenians and out in '67) as well as allowing those involved a means through which to vent their frustration through violence at the political system.⁴¹ In this manner, many became involved in multiple associations, and while most were non-political, they served as a means through which these men could seek an opening for their political views. By the late nineteenth century, many of these leaders had their fingers in multiple political pies. Patrick James Linnane, publican of Jail Street, joined the GAA and National League in the 1880s, the Young Ireland Society, '98 Committee, Oddfellows, Workingmen's Club and Amnesty Association in the 1890s, and in the following decade was associated with the United Irish League, Town Tenants Organisation and also (the constabulary believed) the IRB.⁴² His involvement in multiple organisations meant an astounding influence in all aspects of social and political affairs in both Ennis and throughout the county. In 1894, as member of the Amnesty Association, Linnane was responsible for inciting a large crowd of people from the town of Ennis to seize the local town hall which the Town Councillors had refused to make available for a lecture given by O'Donovan Rossa.⁴³ The purpose of the event, according to Linnane, was to instil in Clare men, as he so confidently put it, the 'spirit of 67' and judging from the actions of the crowd on the occasion, he certainly succeeded in rousing a spirit of resistance and 'strong feeling' of contempt for established authority in the town.⁴⁴

These men were literate and well educated men who were shaped by what they had read. The political views of individuals such as John Conway and Thomas Maguire, were influenced by a variety of nationalist writings ranging from Thomas Francis Meagher to William O'Brien and Charles Kickham.⁴⁵ These men sought to impart such ideas of literature and its ideas to others. Extracts from their favourite books and poems were often incorporated into speeches and reflected in the type of placards that adorned Land League and banners, and other displays, from 1880 onwards. Such placards featured a variety of poets – mostly romantic – ranging from Wordsworth through

⁴¹ CBS, Confidential B Files, Shelf Number 3/716, No 67, B.314.

⁴² CBS, 126/S; CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 15 June 1900, 22189/S; 7 September 1901, 25603/S; *LL*, 12 October 1896, 20 June 1898, 15 February 1899, *CJ*, 30 July 1888, 4 January 1892; *CC*, 2 November 1907.

⁴³ *LL*, 13, 20 June 1894.

⁴⁴ *LL*, 13, 20 June 1894.

⁴⁵ These works are the possession of my great-grandfather, Thomas Maguire, and are still extant. Fenian Papers, Box Nine, R Series, No 4927R.

Byron to Thomas Davis – while others featured tragic-romantic pictures of the Manchester Martyrs and Parnell.⁴⁶ Newspapers were also used by prominent local individuals in an attempt to spread advanced nationalist ideas: Thomas Mahony, shopkeeper’s son, Kilrush and Richard O’Donnell, grocer’s son, Victoria Place, Kilkee both acted as agents for the sale of the *Irish People* in their respective localities.⁴⁷ Teachers like Michael Griffin, who were prominent in staging tenant resistance in the land campaign, acted as agents for the sale of *United Ireland* in their respective districts.⁴⁸ These newspapers were often read and recited to the local population. Outside the shop of shoemaker William Moloney of Feakle, crowds congregated after mass where excerpts were read from the American *Irish World*.⁴⁹ By facilitating the circulation of such publications at a time when they were banned by government, these individuals sought to encourage resistance in their localities. Newsagents, such as Denis McNamara, were sentenced to jail for two weeks in 1887, for the selling of various banned newspapers such as *United Ireland* and cheering for William O’Brien in court.⁵⁰ He was subsequently re-arrested after his release, for selling banned copies of various newspapers, including *United Ireland*, and for displaying a placard with a harp and shamrocks which featured the words ‘God Save Ireland’ outside his window’. On leaving Limerick prison for the second time, when McNamara ‘heard of the suppression of the *Cork Herald* in Ennis he got a good copy of the paper and placed a placard outside the window along with placards of the *United Ireland* and *Weekly News*’.⁵¹ The event generated a huge wave of public sympathy – not to mention an even greater interest in the newspaper. Publicity was so extensive that during his two arrests, a testimonial was staged in his honour through the columns of *United Ireland*, while he

⁴⁶ G.A. Hayes-McCoy, *A History of Irish Flags* (Dublin, 1979) p. 177; *LL*, 28 November 1902; *CI*, 25 December 1880.

⁴⁷ NAI, Fenain Papers, F Series, Box Three, 2267F; Eva O’Cathaoir and Matthew Mac Fheorais ‘The Irish Republican Brotherhood in Clare 1858-1871’, In Matthew Lynch & Patrick Nugent (eds) *Clare History and Society* (Dublin, 2008) p. 467-468.

⁴⁸ *CJ*, 30 Jan 1888.

⁴⁹ *Irish World*, 25 June 1881.

⁵⁰ *CJ*, 24 September 1888.

⁵¹ *CJ*, 15 March 1888.

attracted the attentions of the females receiving tokens of needlework from women in Derry.⁵²

The American Influence:

All of these men's political opinions were shaped by a growing consciousness of events abroad. Many were inspired mostly by the American example, anti-English and advocating political principles which were still only germinating at home. The personal experience of America was vital to the formation of men such as Clune, Slattery and Bennett, who all went America in the 1880s (in the case of Clune and Slattery, to evade arrest, in the case of Bennett probably for economic reasons) while Linnane joined the army in South Africa, where he fought in the first Boer War.⁵³ Such politically enlightened individuals were very much esteemed by the local community and having gained firsthand experience of American democratic and republican ideas, these men were generally to the forefront of nationalist movements on their return home. They brought these ideas from the wider world which they sought to impress upon the local population. These men were among the many other individuals who frequently returned home at this time (some to stay permanently) who sought to impress their political views upon the local population.

Since the 1850s, many young men had emigrated from the county (averaging a rate of 1,340 per year), but now they were returning in even greater numbers.⁵⁴ According to one commentator, who had spent some time in west Clare; 'many emigrants return, after a comparatively short absence, some to visit their friends and some to remain'.⁵⁵ This growing mobility was partly encouraged by prosperity abroad, but was also linked

⁵² *CJ*, 6 February, 15 March 1888. See also, P.W. Clayden, *England Under Coalition: The Political History of Great Britain and Ireland from the General election of 1885 to May 1892* (London, 1892) p. 310.

⁵³ CBS, Confidential B Files, Shelf Number 3/716, No 67; Lord Morley, *Recollections* (London, 1917), vol. 2, pp 31-2; CO904/17, Reel 7, 'Register of Suspects A-F', Bryan Clune; *CJ*, 20 March, 8 September 1890, 24 January 1894.

⁵⁴ Approximate age of emigration [Male Only] for the years, 1851-1910. Clarkson, L.A. et al., *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Emigration, 1851-1911*, SN: 3580.

⁵⁵ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Appendix to the Eight Report: Minutes of Evidence and Documents relating thereto*, H.C. 1908, XLI, p. 156.

with a sense of rising restlessness amongst the youth in general.⁵⁶ It was observed that the ‘young people are fascinated; wonder breeds knowledge; discontent breeds effort, and strengthens the resolve to be up and doing while there is yet time’.⁵⁷ This was something that was also evident within the constabulary. It was reported that young men who entered the force, ‘when they become aware of what their rates of pay’ were ‘not inclined to stay’ and opted instead to earn better wages abroad. One policeman lamented his missed opportunity in 1883 when he stated that:

Ten years ago they were not as enlightened as they are at the present time. I had an uncle in the police who told me to join. I would not have joined the force if I were as wise as present. I would have gone to America.’⁵⁸

It is perhaps this identification of youth with a rising [sense of] restlessness that perhaps best describes the situation in late nineteenth century Clare, as young men, returned home frequently, where they were often associated with encouraging political and cultural organisations in their own localities. The links between the Irish-Americans and those at home were based on the Irish-American desire to ‘increase their status and prestige’ in America (for them an identity ‘that indicated an ancient and glorious past rather than a demeaned and debased one could prove invaluable’) while for the Irish political activist at home, such links were based on their desire to obtain valuable financial aid and assistance.⁵⁹ Yet, the relationship between the two was based on these needs; it also served inadvertently to bolster and stimulate radical nationalist activity at home. Those travelling to and fro between Clare and America brought with them news and ideas from abroad, while their exalted notions of liberty borrowed from America were conveyed to the tenantry at home, facilitating and accelerating provincial politicisation. A local conservative organ, believed that many of these returned immigrants who had the potential for ‘talk talk’, considered ‘that their new nationality has raised them far above their countrymen at home whom they seek to imbue with

⁵⁶ This impetuosity is also reflected in local song, Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 176, Tullycrine, Cill Muire, Micheal O Maran, p. 125.

⁵⁷ *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Appendix to the Eight Report: Minutes of Evidence and Documents relating thereto*, H.C. 1908, XLI, p. 156.

⁵⁸ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, p. 162, 112

⁵⁹ Úna Ní Bhroimeil, ‘American influence on the Gaelic League: Inspiration or control?’ in Betsey Taylor FitzSimon and James H. Murphy (eds), *The Irish Revival Reappraised* (Dublin, 2004) p. 65.

republican notions'.⁶⁰ It was apparent that many of these returned immigrants, who had a more developed sense of the rights of individuals in relation to the state, were successful in encouraging advanced nationalism at home.⁶¹ A judge in Kilrush believed that their liberal perspectives and views on equality meant that returned Americans were 'the most dangerous people' for law enforcers to deal with.⁶²

It became particularly apparent that from the 1880s onwards, that returned emigrants increasingly visited the county, to encourage nationalist movements at home. While their numbers were by no means great, perhaps numbering no more than fifty, these individuals played a crucial and intrinsic part in promoting nationalism at home. Most of these individuals were prominent through their role in encouraging the establishment and running of the Land League. Many returned home and reminded organisers of the 'warm terms of the enthusiastic feeling for Ireland in her struggles, which was felt in the United States'.⁶³ Many of these men, who were considered 'naturalised Americans' encouraged protest and crowd mobilisation during the Land League.⁶⁴ At speeches they hinted at their more advanced political opinions to attentive crowds acknowledging that; 'though another land claims my allegiance, my affections are here still, though I bow to the behests of an adopted sovereignty - the sovereign people of the U.S. - my fealty is shared with the queen at home, and that queen is mother Ireland (immense cheering)'.⁶⁵ Such greater association had the capacity to bolster and encourage nationalist activity at home. The use of American flags, banners and the playing of the American national anthem at demonstrations of the Land League showed that these American links were an important ingredient in shaping the character of nationalism at home.⁶⁶ The concepts of liberty and political independence which these emigrants actively promoted became an important factor in shaping the perception of rural inhabitants, who equated America with greater liberation, both politically and socially. In Kilrush, large numbers of emigrants assembled on the quay *enroute* to America

⁶⁰ *CF*, 2 September 1865.

⁶¹ Breandán Mac Suibhne & Amy Martin, 'Fenians in the Frame: Photographing the Irish Political prisoners, 1865-1868', *The Field Day Review* (2005) p. 107.

⁶² *KH*, 16 October 1879.

⁶³ *MN*, 5 June 1886.

⁶⁴ CBS, Confidential B Files, No 67, Shelf Number 3/716, 15 July 1882.

⁶⁵ *CI*, 19 February 1881.

⁶⁶ *CI*, 19 February, 21 May, 5 November 1881.

where young men danced, sang verses of ‘God Save Ireland’ and cheered for the ‘Irish republic’.⁶⁷

This linkage between home and abroad, and the Irish-American support for nationalist causes at home was kept up and encouraged through the medium of the press. From the 1860s onwards, nationalists subscribed to American newsprint ranging from the *Irish People*, *Irish World*, *New York Herald*, *Boston Citizen*, *Chicago Citizen* and the *Gaelic American*. A newspaper which was ‘largely circulated’ in the county from the 1880s onwards was the *Irish World*.⁶⁸ Through the network of this newspaper, correspondence was maintained and kept up through with those abroad. Immigrants from different parts of America posted second-hand copies of American newspapers to relatives at home, (often in exchange for some local news print) or paid for monthly subscriptions to papers, which were then circulated among the community at home by advanced nationalists.⁶⁹ Clare men and women who kept in close contact with political events in Clare were based in areas such as Ohio, New Jersey, Delaware, New York (West Albany, Elmira, Ithaca) Boston (Massachusetts) and Chicago; popular destinations for Clare immigrants. Nationalist movements at home, such as the Land League, were encouraged through such newsprint. A resident of Nevada wrote, ‘Come on Clare boys let us not fail, Light up the hills of Granuaile, The landlord wears a coat of mail, But we’ll nail him in old Ireland’.⁷⁰ That this connection between those at home and abroad was ever increasing was also suggested through existing letters, and correspondence from America which actively promoted political activity at home. Some of these letters encouraged IRB activity.⁷¹ A letter from an unknown Mr. Crowe from America, addressed to a farmer’s son John Barry from Inagh, informed him that if he feared arrest to ‘come out at once’ to America, and in his place, Crowe offered to return and ‘drill

⁶⁷ *CJ*, 19 April 1888.

⁶⁸ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 6 February 1900, 21140/S.

⁶⁹ *Irish World*, 27 December 1879, Letter to the *Irish World* from Patrick Ross, of Ohio who will exchange the *Irish World* for the *Clare Journal* or *advertiser*. For more examples see *Irish World*, 7 April, 2 October, 27 November 1880, 15 January, 19 February, 9 April 1881. Recipients of the *Irish World* in Clare came from Kilmihil, Newmarket, Ennis, Mountshannon, Feakle, Kilkee and as far west as Carrigaholt and Cross where Volunteers were employed, *Irish World*, 4 December 1880, 15 January 1881.

⁷⁰ *Irish World*, 15 January 1881.

⁷¹ William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan, *Devoy’s Post Bag Volume One* (Dublin, 1979) pp. 493-494. CO904/17, Reel 7, ‘Register of Suspects A-F’, John Barry.

them all'.⁷² This correspondence, in connection with their role in providing aid and ammunition to the movement at home, perhaps impressed upon IRB men at home that they should be even more active than they were previously. According to one IRB activist in Miltown Malbay to a fellow member abroad, their activity on behalf of members of the movement at home revealed the Irish-American willingness to 'endanger their lives and fortune for our sake'.⁷³

The influence of Irish-American activists in political affairs seems to have increased in the 1890s, when newly formed American organisations, such as the Claremen's Association of New York, maintained connections with nationalist movements at home through the local press. This organisation was a generous contributor to the building of the Manchester Martyr Monument in Kilrush, the evicted tenants' fund, as well as the UIL in the first half of the 1900s.⁷⁴ As well as providing funds, they acted as overseers, monitoring the progress of and encouraging the work of the land agitation and the centenary movements, particularly at times of political infighting and party squabbling.⁷⁵ When the construction of the Manchester Martyr Monument was brought to a standstill in Kilrush (aggravated in part by political disputes and personal rivalries between members), both factions were visibly 'impressed' by 'encouraging' letters and appeals from members of the Claremen's Association who 'advised the building of the monument at once'.⁷⁶ What made them so influential was that many of these men had the luxury of being able to speak on popular causes from a distance without being criticised, allowing them to promote a more radical stance than their counterparts at home. This was evident when they encouraged the actions of tenants on an estate in Kilrush, who refused to comply with the terms of the clerical landlord, Fr. Scanlon, until an evicted tenant was reinstated.⁷⁷ But while support was kept up and maintained by Americans at a distance, individuals too, were visiting the county with greater frequency and a growing affluence and mobility encouraged an ever greater rapport

⁷² *CJ*, 8 December 1890.

⁷³ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Volume One*, pp 493-494.

⁷⁴ *CC*, 24 April, 7 May 1909.

⁷⁵ *LL*, 14 August, 11 September, 20 November, 4 December 1901.

⁷⁵ CO904/71, Reel 37, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', September 1900.

⁷⁶ *LL*, 11 September, 20 November 1901.

⁷⁷ *Gaelic American*, 26 September, 21 November 1908; 26 June 1909.

between those at home and abroad.⁷⁸ The police were extremely conscious of this inward movement from the U.S and their reports monitored the suspicious activity of returned Clare emigrants in Ennis, Miltown Malbay, Ennistymon and Kilmurry-McMahon, who frequently visited these localities – often two or three times annually.⁷⁹ These individuals were involved in the promotion of a range of nationalist movements throughout the 1890s, and their presence succeeded in reminding locals of the U.S. support for Irish causes, however, over-exaggerated.

Many Irish-Americans returned home where their support was utilised to encourage greater activity amongst the local population. Despite the conflict of the American-Spanish War, which occupied the concern of most nationalists, Americans were present at the demonstrations in Ennis and Kilrush.⁸⁰ In the procession in Kilrush, were Miss Alice J Hames, Masters John and Austin Hames, of Philadelphia, wearing their '98 badges, while in Ennis, a man was present from St. Paul USA.⁸¹ Their presence was greeted with enthusiasm by most nationalists as it served to remind them of the support and encouragement given them by members abroad. In some instances, (see chapter one) speeches were delivered at these proceedings which encouraged support for the movement at home.⁸² Others were associated with more clandestine activity. A number of suspicious trips home by the American, George Gardiner, was connected with secret society activity and the '98 movements. Gardiner visited Lisdoonvarna and Ennistymon, North Clare, three times between the periods of July 1898-January 1900, each time staying for a month and each time when departing for New York stopping *en route* in Dublin and Liverpool.⁸³ Whatever the exact nature of his activity was, it was obvious to the constabulary that he was attracting the attentions of the local population, perhaps in part because of his frequent buying of drink, but also because of the influence which he undoubtedly exerted during his visit.

⁷⁸ Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish-A History* (New York, 2000) p. 192.

⁷⁹ CBS 28288/S; CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two 12 May 1898, 16325/S, 9 July 1898; PIRSS, Carton Three, 5 July 1902, 27312/S, 26 November 1902, 2 January 1904, 29472/S.

⁸⁰ *LL*, 6 May 1898.

⁸¹ *CJ*, 26 May, 20 June 1898.

⁸² *CC*, 5 September 1903.

⁸³ , CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two: 9 July 1898; 22 November 1898, 17838/S; 21 December 1898; 6 January 1899, 18193/S; 23 March 1899, 19132/S, PIRSS, Carton Three, 25 January 1900, 21140/S.

The actions of these Irish-Americans played no small role in stimulating political activity. On trips home, Irish-Americans visited the Sinn Féin branch in North Clare where they expressed, much to the enthusiasm of its members 'their satisfaction at the advance which the spirit of nationality and self reliance was making among the people of their native parish'.⁸⁴ Stimulus was also given by Americans to the United Irish League, who gave encouragement to the formation of one branch in west Clare. Their ideas, however remote from the then political opinions of the audience present, encouraged a growing mobilisation of the tenantry in support of nationalist causes. At an early meeting of the United Irish League, a returned cleric from Chicago, told those present that in his

.... young days he and others dreamed of an Irish republic, and tried to realise this dream, and though years had passed and they were often disheartened by the blighting of the fondest hopes...they never utterly lost heart, and are now as ready as ever to make an honest and manly effort to the sacred cause of Erin (loud cheers).⁸⁵

These men contributed their own ideas to the nationalist movement. In Miltown Malbay, a man named White returned to the town from Massachusetts, where he organised a production of the play Robert Emmett, in connection with the Gaelic League. Written by American author James Pilgrim, and popular in America at this time, it was apparent that the young White had not only brought home some money to his native town (where he afterwards set up a public house) but also, political ideas and opinions.⁸⁶ These men through their role in encouraging support and facilitating the spread of political ideas at home, added an important dimension to the new nationalism in the late nineteenth century.

The Influence of Women:

While politically influential individuals were predominantly male, women also played a role in mobilising support for popular campaigns within the local community. In nationalist imagery, women were inextricably bound up with ideas of nationhood. Despite the scantiness of the historical record, women crop up at various events

⁸⁴ *Gaelic American*, 9 August 1908.

⁸⁵ *LL*, 20 October 1899.

⁸⁶ *CC*, 26 January 1907.

throughout the late nineteenth century mobilising support for nationalist causes in county Clare.

During the United Irish outbreak in the late 1790s, there was evidence that women were employed throughout the county disseminating the literature of the organisation.⁸⁷ This ‘radical’ association resurfaced over half a century later in 1865 when women were closely monitored by the constabulary for their association with Fenianism. That year witnessed the entry into the county of a large number of suspicious Irish-Americans, coinciding with the disbandment of Union and Confederate soldiers involved in the American Civil War.⁸⁸ Most of these were men, but females too were among those returning. In Miltown Malbay a number of women returning from America were viewed with suspicion by the authorities for their apparent wealth, which they feared was for the benefit of local Fenian circles.⁸⁹ Due to the scantiness of historical record, it is difficult to ascertain what connections, if any, these Irish-American women had with the local branches of the Fenian movement and if they temporarily visited or permanently returned to Miltown Malbay. However, police fears were not unfounded and twenty miles away in Ennis, the district inspector recommended that; ‘It would be well to have females returning from America closely searched for documents or monies connected with this conspiracy’.⁹⁰ In fact arms and messages were at that time being conveyed undetected by respectable women from town to town, from Ireland to the US and vice versa and in the local constabulary’s opinion, women were employed in ‘every kind of service’ for the Fenians.⁹¹

Women’s association with Fenianism was again apparent following plans to stage a rising in March 1867. In Kilrush, local tradition had it that a woman was dispatched on horse-back to Kilbaha, west Clare, to signal to the leaders there that the proposed insurrection was cancelled.⁹² It appears that in comparison to their male counterparts, women were utilised because they were far more successful in their ability to evade police suspicions. It was during this period of increased law enforcement followed by

⁸⁷ *Ennis Chronicle*, 18 January 1799.

⁸⁸ Fenian Papers, Box One, 971F; *CF*, 2 September 1865.

⁸⁹ Fenian Papers, Box Four, 3693F.

⁹⁰ Fenian Papers, Box Four, 3693F.

⁹¹ Fenian Papers, Box Four, 3693F.

⁹² IRA Witness Statements, Art O’Donnell, Tullycrine, O/C West Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1322.

the suspension of Habeus Corpus resulting in the imprisonment of a large number of Fenians, that women became assigned the responsibility of importing arms and ammunition into the county.⁹³

Women's involvement in Fenianism was motivated by both patriotic and practical reasons. The imprisonment of many male 'breadwinners' in the county since 1866 had left women in a precarious financial position and it could be argued that the mothers and wives of suspects became the real victims of government coercion and the imprisonment of suspects without trial. The *Irishman*, conscious of the emotions it could stir by publicising such realities, reported on the imprisonment of Martin Donnellan, a labourer from East Clare. According to the paper, 'he was the sole support of his aged mother, and indefinitely did he toil to procure for her the necessary means of support. She was by his arrest deprived of her only prop.'⁹⁴ Many families in Clare found it difficult to acquire any sustenance or profit from their farms or businesses (i.e. bakeries, shops etc) without the assistance of sons or husbands, especially with increases in the price of hired labour.⁹⁵ For these reasons and to prevent some families from losing income, 'An Appeal to the Women of Ireland' was published in the columns of the *Irishman* newspaper, which gathered funds for the wives of imprisoned Fenian leaders. Subscriptions were received from far and wide, and money was collected abroad in America, Australia and England and at home mostly in Clare, Kilkenny, Belfast and Cork.⁹⁶ While collecting subscriptions was part and parcel of the practical work of these committees, they granted women an attractive opportunity to engage in political-cum-social activities which had previously been male dominated.

The most dramatic and obvious female role in facilitating Fenianism was in 1867, when Fenian funerals became occasions when women and girls identified themselves en masse with the revolutionary movement. The death of the Manchester Martyrs in November 1867 witnessed the staging of mass demonstrations throughout the country in protest against the public hanging of the three Fenians, Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien. Masses were said throughout Clare, including Ennistymon, Kilkee, O'Callaghans Mills,

⁹³ Fenian Papers, Box Three, 2267F; *Irish Freedom*, August 1912.

⁹⁴ *Irishman*, 16 September 1866.

⁹⁵ Fenian Papers, Box 6, 2006R; Fenian Papers, Box Fourteen, 7060R.

⁹⁶ *Irishman*, 6 October 1866, 3 November, 29 December 1866.

and Quin, where not just the young men but also the women were, according to one cleric, ‘red hot Fenians’ who requested the staging of these memorial services.⁹⁷ Churches were decorated, national colours were worn, and in some areas, girls were despatched by clerics in Carrigaholt to engage in house to house visits to collect monies for the families of local imprisoned Fenians.⁹⁸

Women’s association with nationalist causes continued throughout the nineteenth century. On a practical level, women were responsible for decorating the towns on national occasions, creating banners and wearing national attire, including green shawls, scarves, dresses, gloves, ribbons, rosettes and parasols, but to name the obvious.⁹⁹ On a psychological level, it is however more significant that women played an important role in influencing their male counterparts’ political opinion. No political candidate in Clare could ignore the female capacity to influence popular opinion. A ballad which appeared in Ennis acknowledged that women’s incapacity to vote did not mean they lacked influence on the candidates success on election day, for ‘although a vote they can’t give, their sweet voices do more’.¹⁰⁰ On his election in 1879, nationalist candidate and Home Rule MP, O’Gorman Mahon, attributed his success to ‘the women of Clare’ who ‘instilled into the minds of their children a spirit of patriotism’.¹⁰¹ Although this did not entirely account for Mahon’s success, his courtship of female support suggests that women had more influence than previously considered. They were closely identified with defending their homesteads through their support for the Land League and Ladies Land League in the early 1880s. Women were successful in generating public attention and sympathy and perhaps because of this were often encouraged by nationalist MPs such as Davitt. The resistance of women to the evictions on the Bodyke estate and their subsequent arrest generated world-wide publicity and sympathy from America to New Zealand.¹⁰² It lingered long in local memory too. Banners proclaiming ‘Hurrah for

⁹⁷ *Irishman*, 7, 14, 28, December 1867; Oliver P Rafferty, *The Church the State and the Fenian threat* (1999, London) p. 104.

⁹⁸ Fenian Papers, Box Sixteen, 4924R.

⁹⁹ *Irishman*, 14, 21, December 1867; Fenian Papers, Box Four, 4955; Fenian Papers, Box Sixteen, 8476; *LC*, 11 December 1867; *CF*, 14 December 1867.

¹⁰⁰ Inchiquin Papers (National Library of Ireland), Collection 143, ms. 45, 429/6.

¹⁰¹ *CI*, 24 May 1879.

¹⁰² *Timaru Herald*, 28 July 1887.

the women of Bodyke who made such a glorious fight' became a popular rallying cry at League meetings.¹⁰³

But while women became briefly or intermittently associated with the land agitation, both social committees and political organisations were male dominated and women's involvement was minimal. Clubs and associations which existed in both the 1880s and 1890s, such as the GAA, Irish National Foresters, '98 Committees and Young Ireland Society had exclusively male memberships and while both the '98 committee and the Young Ireland Society attempted to recruit women, their roles were auxiliary at best.¹⁰⁴ However, with the onset of cultural nationalist organisations in the 1900s, women became a very important asset within the nationalist movement. In Clare, women participated alongside men in branches of the Gaelic League, where they often obtained senior positions. In their support of nationalist causes these women had far more freedom to engage and participate in the activities of the League, without the restrictions imposed upon them by their sex in other contemporary social activities.¹⁰⁵ Female members were involved in a range of activities through the Gaelic League: as members, they were singers, dancers, actors in plays and musicians; as instructors, they taught the Irish language and traditional crafts in local branches and as national school teachers, such women played a very important role in influencing the nationalist ethos of the school room.¹⁰⁶ National school teachers were often the most enthusiastic supporters of the language movement: in Kilbaha, Miss O'Gorman, 'an ardent Leaguer' taught her school children distinctively nationalist songs such as 'Erin go bragh' 'An saighdiúir' and 'An tSean Bhean Bhocht'.¹⁰⁷ These women showed a strong identification with and support for nationalist causes through their membership of the Gaelic League. Young female members sang songs which indicated their political sympathies; such as 'the Felons of our Land' and 'A Nation Once Again'.¹⁰⁸ As their participation in such activity increased, women were becoming increasingly identified with radical nationalist movements such as the Gaelic League and the

¹⁰³ *CJ*, 5 September 1887.

¹⁰⁴ *CI*, 6 January 1885; Martin Corry (ed.) *Clare Association Yearbook* (Dublin, 2005) p. 20.

¹⁰⁵ *CC*, 8 February 1908.

¹⁰⁶ *CC*, 16 March 1907.

¹⁰⁷ *CC*, 30 March 1907.

¹⁰⁸ *CC*, 30 March 1907, 11 January 1908.

Daughter of Erin. At least, this was the opinion of the constabulary, who in their attempts to monitor their activities considered them a far more ‘mischievous lot and much harder to deal with than a man’.¹⁰⁹ When a branch of the Daughters of Erin (1900-1914), a semi-political cultural and literary organisation, was established in connection with the Young Ireland Society in neighbouring Limerick, the authorities expressed fears over a possible future association with radical nationalism; ‘that women were dangerous conspirators in the old Fenian days, and this looks like history repeating itself’. The chief secretary concurred: ‘women were dangerous conspirators in the old Fenian days, but they did not advertise themselves’.¹¹⁰ But while women had an extensive influence in the male dominated political sphere, their role and status was confined within patriarchal Victorian and Catholic ideology which expected women to be pure, pious and domestic, and while nationalist and subsequent republican movements appeared to confer on women great status and mobility, their perceptions of women were closely identified within these more restrictive ideologies and conventions.¹¹¹

The Ladies’ Committees, which sought to support the wives and families of imprisoned Fenian suspects, provided an attractive social outlet for women whose interests were heretofore confined within the home. These committees facilitated the distribution of patriotic journals such as the *Shamrock*. This journal which was specifically geared towards an Irish middle-class audience was a popular story magazine (featuring authors from Carleton, and Kickham) which featured articles on Irish poetry, music, songs, food, industry, biography and antiquities.¹¹² This was very similar to Blunt’s analysis of parallel developments in contemporary England, where ‘the rise of the bourgeois feminine domesticity over the nineteenth century and the identification of reading as a leisured, private activity meant that middle class women were increasingly targeted as readers of household guides, periodicals and novels’.¹¹³ By fostering a unique sense of

¹⁰⁹ CBS, PIRSS, Carton 3, 6 February 1901, 24032/S.

¹¹⁰ CBS, PIRSS, Carton 3, 6 February 1901, 24032/S. *LL*, 4, 9 January, 20 February, 18 March, 28 October 1901, 19, 28 March, 2 October, 29 December 1902.

¹¹¹ Carolyn A. Conley, ‘No Pedestals: Women and Violence in late nineteenth century Ireland’, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 28 (1995) p. 801.

¹¹² *Irishman*, 29 December 1866; Tom Clyde, *Irish Literary Magazines: An outline history and descriptive bibliography* (Dublin, 2003) p.132.

¹¹³ Alison Blunt, ‘Geographies of Home: British domesticity in India, 1886-1925’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* Vol. 24 (December 1999) p. 425.

‘Irishness’ the *Shamrock* sought to counter the circulation of these popular English journals and periodicals which were conversely portrayed as tainting Irish female morality.

However, although such organisations and publications granted women a degree of freedom, they also served to confine them. While patriotic journals such as the *Shamrock* and other Irish household guides attempted to assert their independence from their English counterparts, the Irish publications were essentially the same. While both Irish and English magazines ‘asserted their female readership they also represented and repeated the discourse of bourgeois femininity to which their readers were still aspiring’.¹¹⁴ Both echoed Victorian conventions in their representation of women: portraying them as domestic, virtuous, fragile, pious and maternal. Writing to the *Irishman*, one member of the Ladies’ Committee thanked Mrs O’Donovan Rossa and Mrs. Thomas Clarke Luby for their ‘liberal distribution’ of the *Shamrock*, concluding; ‘we are becoming quite demented from *Punch* and other destructive alien importations so adverse to our nature’.¹¹⁵ A correspondent from Ennis stated;

A large amount of money is spent daily by them in the purchase of English periodicals, which are more calculated to destroy virtue and demoralise our country than enlighten it. Let then, our county women say in future, I want to know no more of the brutal vices of London dens, I will not dishonour the virtuous graves of our mothers, I shall not buy such trash whilst Irish wives and children are starving....¹¹⁶

Women’s participation in nationalist demonstrations, as in print material, was defined within these conventions. Through their portrayal of women and their use of symbolism, the nationalist processions combined romantic nationalism and religious imagery. The Irish experience was not, however, unique. In the much later case of Indonesia during the independence struggle of the 1940s and 50s, the woman in nationalist rhetoric was constructed in a form similar to the Irish *Róisín Dubh* and the *Shan Van Vocht*: a ‘fragile feminine being who needs to be rescued, protected and guarded from the cruelty of foreign power’.¹¹⁷ In the Irish context this nationalist

¹¹⁴ Blunt, ‘Geographies of Home’, p. 426.

¹¹⁵ *Irishman*, 1 December 1866.

¹¹⁶ *Irishman*, 8 September 1866.

¹¹⁷ Saraswati Sunindyo, ‘When the Earth is Female and the Nation is Mother: Gender, the Armed Forces and Nationalism in Indonesia’, *Feminist Review* No. 58 (Spring, 1998) p.4.

ideology reflected the image of the ‘virgin mother’ or, alternatively, the ‘maid of Erin’ suffering for Ireland’s sons then incarcerated or exiled, an image that was inextricably bound up with Catholicism. At Manchester Martyrs demonstrations in Clare and other areas in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the nationalist motif of suffering mother was represented by the women who wept freely at these events, while the solemnity of the occasion reflected Catholic funerary symbolism.¹¹⁸

In Limerick, a Manchester Martyr demonstration was staged on Sunday 8 December 1867 following the public hanging of Allen, Larkin and O’Brien, and drew various contingents from Clare, Limerick city and county.¹¹⁹ The procession was led by Father Quaide, a native of Limerick and parish priest of O’Callaghan’s Mills in East Clare, followed by a hearse drawn by six horses, covered in black pall, and white edging, with the three names of Allen, Larkin and O’Brien there inscribed.¹²⁰ Behind this marched between two and three thousand women, all of ‘respectable appearance’ their clothes ‘scrupulously and faultlessly neat’ wearing green feathers, ribands, veils, dresses, gloves, parasols, or any other piece of attire which displayed the national colour.¹²¹ ‘Women also added more emotional intensity to these events because they tended to behave more demonstrably than men’.¹²² These women weeping freely, walked in solemn procession and ‘bore all the traces of mourning as if they were after the bier of some departed friend...their conduct was so striking that the observer could not admire conduct so noble on the part of the women of Limerick’.¹²³ Local connections with the Manchester Martyrs served to heighten the emotional intensity of the event; one of Allen’s sisters was married to T. Hogan, a clerk and book-keeper in Limerick. These women, led by the cleric, halted at the cemetery where the crowds departed, shouting ‘God Save Ireland’.¹²⁴ At Amnesty

¹¹⁸ Gary Owens, ‘Nationalist Monuments in Ireland, c1870-1914: Symbolism and Ritual’, In Brian P Kennedy & Raymond Gillespie (eds) *Ireland: Art Into History* (Dublin, 1994) p. 114.

¹¹⁹ *CF*, 14 December 1867; *LC*, 11 December 1867.

¹²⁰ *Irishman*, 14 December 1867; Fenian Papers, Box Four, 4955; Diocesan Archives, Westbourne, Ennis. Ennis, File relating to Patrick Quaide, PP, O’Callaghan’s Mills, *Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator*, 27 April 1875.

¹²¹ *Irishman*, 14 December 1867; Fenian Papers, Box Four, 4955

¹²² Gary Owens, ‘Constructing the Martyrs: The Manchester executions and the nationalist imagination’, in Lawrence W McBride (ed.) *Images, Icons and the Irish Nationalist Imagination* (Dublin, 1999) p. 29.

¹²³ *Irishman*, 14 December 1867.

¹²⁴ *Irishman*, 14 December 1867; *CF*, 14 December 1867.

demonstrations staged in Ennis in the late 1860s, the secretary of the Trades, Michael Considine, employed both Catholic funerary and nationalist imagery, as the procession was led by a large carriage, drawn by horses, ‘and in the couch a figure reclined dressed in black to represent the sister of a Fenian who was shot during the Fenian rising’.¹²⁵

Thus, women by their participation in these events played a prominent part in facilitating the identification of Catholicism with nationalism in the late nineteenth century. This association became most apparent in the construction of a Manchester Martyr Monument or ‘Maid of Erin’ in each of the towns of Ennis and Kilrush. The ‘Maid of Erin’ which combined the image of Mary, mother of God, and the [nationalist] representation of Ireland as a woman ‘expressed popular feeling, that Irish Catholicism was bound up with nationalism’.¹²⁶

Women were not only perceived as the representation of national culture, they were also its repositories. However, it is only by analysing the mother’s duties and behaviour in the family that one can understand the influence she exercised in shaping political attitudes. In the countryside, the day to day work of the small farmer was assigned by gender. ‘Broadly speaking, in farming families with children, the men spent most of their time working out of doors, while the women’s activities centred primarily around the inside of the home’.¹²⁷ While the woman’s duties in farming homes tended to be quite extensive, (i.e. feeding calves, milking cows, tending to poultry, pigs, and assisting on meadows and turf bogs) often bringing with it a degree of economic independence, changing customs witnessed the woman’s role become increasingly confined to the household.¹²⁸ Improved living standards, diet and clothing, all meant that the woman’s duties increasingly centred on the home.¹²⁹ This also coincided with a growing ethos, instilled by Catholic ideology, which served to encourage women’s role as both homemaker and

¹²⁵ Fenian Papers, Box Sixteen, 8476, Ennis and Ennistymon Amnesty Meeting, 1869.

¹²⁶ Orlaith Mannion, ‘Silent but eloquent reminders: the nationalist monuments in Cork and Skibereen’, in Laurence Geary (ed.) *Rebellion and Remembrance* (Dublin, 2001) p. 187.

¹²⁷ Claudia Kinmonth, *Irish Rural Interiors in Art* (New Haven, 2006), p. 81.

¹²⁸ Lorna Moloney, ‘Welch’s Claddagh Images’ in Ciara Breathnach (ed.) *Framing the west: Images of Rural Ireland, 1890 – 1920* (Dublin, 2007) p. 156.

¹²⁹ Johanna Burke, *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, economic change and housework in Ireland, 1890-1914* (Oxford, 1993) p. 206.

mother.¹³⁰ These cultural changes now meant that the rearing of children became of central importance. Both child and mother worked in close companionship with one another through their daily duties in the home, and it was generally the case that, until old enough to assist his father on the farm, the child spent most of his time in the presence of the mother.¹³¹ In their anthropological study of Clare in the 1930s, Arensberg and Kimball noted features of family life that echoed those discernable in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. They noted how in a child's early life, strong emotional and intimate bonds often develop between him and his mother who, acting as guide and role model, had a great influence upon, and, 'looms larger in the child consciousness than the father'.¹³² The links established between the mother and child at these early stages was often continued throughout child's life into adulthood. Frequent visits home by Clare Fenians, such as John Clune and Stephen Joseph Meany to their mothers (often at times of illness), suggest that the bonds they forged at childhood were not so easily broken.¹³³

The emotional ties which these mothers shared with their sons and the influence they exerted on their opinions and attitudes in later years is evident in a surviving letter written by Brigit Clune to the nationalist press. The letter was written some years after the transportation of her son John in 1868, and following the subsequent arrest in 1881 of her other two sons, Bryan and Matthew, all of whom were involved in the IRB.¹³⁴ The forceful, emotional language she used in reference to her children highlighted the strong and intimate bonds which these very nationalist mothers (something also noted by Garvin¹³⁵), shared with their sons.¹³⁶

During my existence under the British constitution I have ever obeyed those laws, however repugnant to my feelings. Yet what are my facts? In the memorable year of 67 my peace was first assailed by legal authority, when the minions of the existing government entered my dwelling, arrested my son, and

¹³⁰ Liam O'Dowd, 'Church, State and Women' in, Chris Curtin, Pauline Jackson, Barbara O'Connor (eds.) *Gender in Irish Society* (Galway, 1987) p. 29.

¹³¹ Burke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, p. 229.

¹³² Arensberg and Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*, p. 52.

¹³³ *CI*, 9 May 1885; *MN*, 1 December 1886; *CJ*, 2 December 1886.

¹³⁴ For information on John Clune's arrest Fenian Papers, Box Six, 2006R; on Bryan and Matthew's arrest C.S.O.R.P. 1882.32122.

¹³⁵ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858-1928* (New York, 1987) p. 27.

¹³⁶ This was something also shared by mothers of O'Donovan Rossa and John Daly; see Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, *Recollections 1838-1898* (Shannon, 1972) p. 9, 115; *Irish Freedom*, March 1912.

cruelly incarcerated him in Mountjoy Kilmainham. Well I haven't said that I never abused the laws made by England in her (mis) government of this sorely tried nation. Neither did John Clune at present in New York City. After a long imprisonment they released him only to increase my pain. They transported him across the Atlantic, never to catch a glimpse of his native home....¹³⁷

The strong link that was forged between mothers such as Brigit Clune and their sons played no small role in influencing their radical nationalist sympathies. It was within the family that such mothers' fostered and encouraged Irish patriotism, which was so often, in nationalist rhetoric, closely identified with women. Concluding her correspondence by alluding to Ingram's *Memory of the Dead*, the powerful composition of John Kells Ingram, Brigit Clune adequately summed up her strongly nationalist political opinions. Speaking of her two Fenian sons then confined in Naas jail, she stated, 'well I will bear it as it becomes an Irish mother...and if it pleases the government to let them expire in a prison cell, I will also pray that from the clay full many a race may start'.¹³⁸

This influence of the 'patriot mother' did not end with the nineteenth century. Later oral accounts from IRA men in Clare also acknowledge retrospectively the part played by their mothers in encouraging their nationalist sentiment. One in particular, is the account given by Art O'Donnell, Commandant of the West Clare Brigade, regarding his mother Mary, who was an aunt of Con Colbert and cousin of Sean McDermott, of the Gaelic League and of later 1916 fame. When O'Donnell was ten years of age, during which time he would have been mostly confined to the household, he was made conscious 'that our country was held in subjection by England by force of arms, that several attempts had been made to overthrow British Rule, particular emphasis having been laid on the risings of 1798, 1803, 1848 and 1867'. Linked to their sons by bonds of affection and care at an early stage, the mothers had the capacity to evoke emotions. The great majority of these men were young boys in the 1880s and 1900s, a time when women were becoming increasingly politicised by their involvement in popular movements such as the Land League and the Gaelic League, and perhaps because of such, influenced their children's political opinions. Art O'Donnell stated that his mother's knowledge of

¹³⁷ CI, 24 December 1881.

¹³⁸ CI, 24 December 1881.

history, local and national was ‘coloured with an intense longing for Irish freedom’ which ‘set us all on the war path long before the struggle started’.¹³⁹

From the statements it appears that in some instances, at least, the father had a lesser part to play in transmitting such memories and influences. When referring to their fathers in such statements the accounts usually concerned farm matters and were not coloured with the same affection as that for the mother. Anthony Malone of Miltown Malbay was quick to refute the idea that his father had any revolutionary past. Despite the strong correlation between small farmers and political activism in the Clare context, Malone described his father a ‘small farmer, who, like his people before him, never had any connection with national movements of the past’.¹⁴⁰ On his maternal side on the other hand, ‘I had an uncle who was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood’.¹⁴¹ Michael Gleeson of Bodyke said that ‘beyond the fact that my father was a Parnellite and later a member of the UIL, I do not think he had any other connection with National organisations’.¹⁴² Perhaps because of his republican proclivities, Michael Gleeson was not very keen on acknowledging his parliamentary heritage and appeared to undermine his father’s quite long history of support for parliamentary causes. His mother, on the other hand, was acknowledged as having a strong connection with the past: ‘she used to tell us that her father was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood’.¹⁴³

It appears that the mother had more weight than the father on the development of the son’s strong emotive nationalism and acted as an intermediary between father and son not only in times of family strife and argument. Even when their fathers had strong republican or nationalist links, the son’s knowledge of this often came through their mothers.¹⁴⁴ It was clear, then, that the woman assumed the responsibility for reminding her sons of nationalist causes. By finding a connection between the local experience of

¹³⁹ IRA Witness Statements, Art O’Donnell, Tullycrine, O/C West Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1322

¹⁴⁰ IRA Witness Statements, Anthony Malone, Ennis Road, Miltown Malbay, Adjutant and Vice O/C fourth Battalion Mid-Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1076.

¹⁴¹ IRA Witness Statements, Anthony Malone, Ennis Road, Miltown Malbay, Adjutant and Vice O/C fourth Battalion Mid-Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1076.

¹⁴² IRA Witness Statements, Michael Gleeson, Bodyke, Captain Bodyke Company: Adjutant fifth Battalion East Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1288.

¹⁴³ IRA Witness Statements, Michael Gleeson, Bodyke, Captain Bodyke Company: Adjutant fifth Battalion East Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1288.

¹⁴⁴ IRA Witness Statements, Art O’Donnell, Tullycrine, O/C West Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1322

insurrection and the national narrative, folk history grounded that tradition in the locality: what made the tales of rebellion from 1798 to 1867 ‘most interesting’ was the ‘epic tales of local feats achieved by the fathers or grandfathers of people known to us’.¹⁴⁵ This link became even more immediate when it was identified as being within the family or ‘in one’s blood’. There is strong awareness of being of republican ‘blood’ or ‘stock’. Patrick Kerin of Miltown Malbay recounted that his mother ‘had Fenian blood’.¹⁴⁶ One commentator in referring to the old Fenian Mr O’Donnell of Tullycrine said his wife was of the same ‘stock’.¹⁴⁷ Evident in both local and national record, it was apparent that these women became an important part in enforcing an identity which contributed in no small measure to influencing their son’s republican ideas in the post independence period.¹⁴⁸

These women were, like their male counterparts, were becoming part of the upwardly mobile and increasingly politicised members of the Catholic bourgeoisie and upper working class. Women who became involved in supporting radical nationalist movements in the 1860s, tended to be daughters or wives of members of the artisan class (however this is not part of the Catholic bourgeoisie) in the towns and of small farmers in the countryside.¹⁴⁹ It is much more difficult to gauge the social status of the large numbers of women present at the Amnesty and Manchester Martyr demonstrations of the 1860s and 1870s as each newspaper, according to its political opinions, took a different perspective. Conservative newspapers such as the *Limerick Chronicle* and *Clare Freeman*, described them as lower class ‘street amazons’ or ‘factory girls’, while advanced nationalist newspaper accounts such as the *Irishman* described them explicitly as coming from the middle class and being of ‘respectable appearance’.¹⁵⁰ The answer probably lies somewhere in between – many were part of

¹⁴⁵IRA Witness Statements, Art O’Donnell, Tullycrine, O/C West Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1322; Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French, Irish Folk History and social memory* (Madison, 2007) p. 213.

¹⁴⁶IRA Witness Statements, Patrick Kerin, Knocklistrane, Miltown Malbay, Captain of Gelndine Coy Fourth Battalion Mid-Clare Brigade, BMH.WS0977.

¹⁴⁷IRA Witness Statements, John Flannagan, Tullagower, Tullycrine, Commandant Second Battalion West Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1316; Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁸Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁹Fenian Papers, F Series, Box Three, 2267F; *CI*, 24 December 1881; IRA Witness Statements, Art O’Donnell, Tullycrine, O/C West Clare Brigade, BMH.WS1322.

¹⁵⁰*Limerick Chronicle*, 11 December 1867, *CF*, 30 November 1867; *Irishman*, 14 December 1867.

the aspiring urban and rural middle class of the late nineteenth century whose presence at these demonstrations coincided with an increased affluence in town and countryside.

This intermediate social position (whose male representatives have been described by Garvin as ‘men in the middle’) is suggested in the great attention to detail newspaper and police accounts give to the type of dress and fashionable attire worn by these women on such occasions.¹⁵¹ Travelling in Clare in the 1860s, Coulter similarly drew attention to women’s fashions, which he equated with the increased income of farmers:

There are instances of young girls, the daughters of small farmers, who some years ago made their appearance at fairs and markets in their bare feet and clothed in tattered garments, now flaunting about in handsome gowns, with hoops of the most fashionable amplitude, and turban hats and feathers of the newest style. Ridiculous as such illustrations of female vanity in persons of a rank so humble undoubtedly are, they afford no slight proof of the prosperous condition of the farming class during the last few years....¹⁵²

The desire for better lifestyles which Coulter had identified with the farming classes in 1861 was evident some years later in 1883 when the rank and file of the RIC, many of whom were farmers’ sons, were engaging in a concerted strike against the government for improved pay and conditions. One constable, evidently not very sympathetic towards his colleagues, believed the rank and file’s demands for increased remuneration was partly attributed to the higher standard of living to which the farming classes had grown accustomed;

The men [of the RIC] may be of the same class or caste as ten years ago, but the same class live better now than then. They may be of the same class, farmer’s sons and the like, but they live better in every way, and there is a better style of living throughout the kingdom than heretofore.¹⁵³

However, signs of affluence among the farming class should not be interpreted as reflecting economic realities. A local ten acre farmer complained that the same farmers whom Coulter observed had expended a lot of their money on ‘fine clothes for their

¹⁵¹ Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries*, p. 13; *Irishman*, 14 December 1867; Fenian Papers, Box Four, 4955.

¹⁵² Henry Coulter, ‘An Account of Post-famine Clare, 1861’, in Brian O’Dalaigh (ed.) *The Strangers Gaze*, p. 256.

¹⁵³ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, p.10.

wives and daughters, and now they find it hard to pay for them'.¹⁵⁴ That so much income was spent in support of such nationalist displays is substantiated the obituary of an apple woman, Hannah Carthy of Kildimo, (south of Miltown Malbay and East of Quilty). Hannah was a woman of 'extreme nationalist' political sympathies and had managed to realise some 'seventy or eighty pounds at her death'. After giving money to her friends and for religious purposes, Hannah 'bequeathed ten pounds for a green coffin, a hearse with green plumes, and a green flag on the day of the funeral!' The funeral reminded an observer 'of an occasion at a land meeting, grand displays of flags and other emblems. In short it was a demonstration of no mean dimensions'.¹⁵⁵ In any case, the women who supported nationalist causes occupied the divide between lower and middle class. Coming from humble origins, increased income and prosperity during periods of agricultural boom in the late nineteenth century allowed them to emulate their social superiors in dress and attire and gave them greater mobility and time to frequent the political demonstrations, clubs and societies, and to engage in house to house collections for various political causes.¹⁵⁶

These female individuals, along with their male counterparts, were important in the spread of political ideas in the county from the 1860s onwards. Within the home, nationalist women were crucial in shaping the type of radical nationalist ideas that would later be shared by their sons. In the towns and particularly in the countryside, their male counterparts facilitated the transmission of popular political thought outside the main urban centres. This period also coincided with the return of a number of Clare emigrants home who served to link local campaigns with broader political issues, and influenced the formation of a radical political identity at home. In the late nineteenth century these individuals, whether at home or abroad, served to increasingly shape an emerging radical political consciousness at local level.

¹⁵⁴ Coulter, 'An Account of Post-famine Clare, 1861', p. 256.

¹⁵⁵ *Kilrush Herald and Kilkee Gazette* (cited hereafter as *KH*), 27 November 1879

¹⁵⁶ For house to house subscriptions for Fenian suspects see, Fenian Papers, Box Sixteen, 4924R; and for 1798 commemoration see, Martin Corry (ed.) *Clare Association Yearbook* (Dublin, 2005) p. 20; *LL*, 20 October 1897; women were also responsible for collecting for the Ennis Manchester Martyr monument.

Chapter Six: Associationalism, social clubs and politics

While the role of individuals was paramount in the politicisation process, their influence could never have been as powerful without the existence of activities, venues and events that allowed groups to associate in an atmosphere conducive to the spread of new political ideas. The rising prosperity which occurred throughout the latter decades of the nineteenth century in both the town and countryside facilitated the growth of social recreational opportunities that provided exactly this atmosphere.

This was particularly apparent in the case of the public house, which, from the late nineteenth century assumed greater centrality in community life. Corresponding with national trends, the number of public houses increased significantly from the 1850s onwards.¹ Whereas in 1841 there was approximately one public house to every four thousand head of population, by 1881 there was roughly one pub for every seven hundred individuals. In the town of Ennis alone, the number of grocers and spirit dealers had jumped from about thirteen to eighty-three between the years 1846 to 1875.² Coinciding with their growth in the latter half of the nineteenth century, public houses became an important aspect of working class life.³

Licensed premises were not just a haven for popular drinking and conviviality, but met a variety of needs. By the early twentieth century, shops and small groceries were often attached to the premises, which provided food and other goods to the local consumer. If such goods proved unobtainable, the publican served as a local 'bank manager' and advanced credit to farmers in times of need.⁴ The publican's centrality in securing the small farmer's economic advancement was evident in his role in matchmaking, an important function of rural society which, if arranged well, could secure the small

¹ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland*, p. 165.

² Clarkson, *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Occupations*, SN: 3495; Vaughan and Fitzpatrick *Irish Historical Statistics*, p. 8. *Bassett's Directory*, 1875-1876; *Slaters Directory*, 1846.

³ Takagami, 'The Dublin Fenians', p. 94.

⁴ *CI*, 21 January 1881; Samuel Clark, 'The Political Mobilisation of Irish Farmers' In Alan O'Day (ed.) *Reactions to Irish Nationalism* (West Virginia, 1987) p. 68.

farmer's continued prosperity.⁵ The publican was not only a purveyor of beers and wines, but provided the community with a variety of other entertainment, catering for all individuals and age groups. In the 1860s, tents were erected by local publicans in the countryside where races were held and 'scenes of drunkenness ensued'.⁶ In the 1890s, a publican in Kildysart staged dances which 'several dozen young people attended' in his kitchen, while those who preferred a more suitable degree of privacy were granted the use of the 'snug'.⁷

The publican himself was a figure of authority in his local community. He was prominent in local land agitation, local government and other political circles and, like Jeremiah Ahern, Ennis publican and member of the IRB, was regarded by the local community as an authority on all matters.⁸ Before the extended availability of print culture in the late nineteenth century, the public house was an important information centre where gossip and information was exchanged. Thus a publican's role was not simply as a host for collective drinking, but he was, most importantly, a source of news. In fact, many publicans sold newspapers on their premises, while some went even further than this. In Kilrush, south-west Clare, publican Joe Kett read extracts from newspapers such as the *Nation*.⁹ Because of their constant interaction with the local community and their interest in local politics, publicans were abreast of most political events and incidents. Many of them increasingly exercised these political opinions from the 1880s onwards: becoming involved in the overthrow of landlord dominance through their involvement in Poor Law Boards and the Land League.¹⁰ Their increasing involvement in the political sphere no doubt influenced the highly politicised nature of the public house. In the interests of the Land League, publicans were frequent correspondents to local and national newspapers, where they informed on local events ranging from evictions to land grabbing.¹¹ The majority of these politically active publicans appear to have run profitable businesses, were affluent and educated, and

⁵ Warren Rovetch, *The Creaky Traveller in the west of Ireland: Clare, Kerry and West Cork* (Boulder, 2006) p. 33; *Special Commissions 1867, The county and city of Cork, and the county and city of Limerick in the cases of high treason and treason felony, for the counties of Clare and Kerry* (Dublin, 1871).

⁶ *CJ*, 16 September 1860.

⁷ *Weekly independent*, 30 January 1895; CO 903/4, p.66; Kinmonth, *Irish Rural Interiors in Art* p. 201.

⁸ *LL*, 30 May 1898.

⁹ Liam O'Sé, 'Gun Running in 1882', *The Other Clare*, 67.

¹⁰ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland*, p. 166.

¹¹ *Daily Independent*, 2 October 1895; CO 903/5, p. 24

because of this they were frequently called upon by the local community to represent its opinions through memorials or letters to the press. A letter of protest sent to Dublin Castle concerning an incident of land grabbing in Ennistymon was reported by the constabulary as being sent by a publican in the village whose mind was apparently ‘a little astray and the people [know] that he is fond of writing everything he hears to some member of government’. Such public houses were used as arenas through which to channel a popular grievance, which had, according to the RIC man, ‘led feelings to run very high in the district’.¹² The publican represented the interests of his community on land issues and in Kilfenora, north Clare, in 1879 tenants were granted the use of one licensed premises to write up a memorial address to their landlord.¹³

As the publican was often immersed in local and national political events, it was therefore unsurprising that public houses became popular areas of political thought and discussion. As in Imperial Germany, where ‘the public house became a centre for news and gossip, a reading room and debating chamber’, the pubs of Clare, both urban and rural, were political meeting places.¹⁴ When taken in terms of the ratio of public houses to population, it appears that public houses particularly dominated in larger hinterlands such as Ballyvaughan, which had one public house to every sixteen people, Kildysart, 1:21, Tulla, 1:35, Ennistymon, 1:36, Scariff, 1:49, Corofin, 1:61, Kilrush, 1:85, and in Ennis, 1:140 people.¹⁵ However public houses proliferated in urban centres and were most numerous in the towns of Ennis, Ennistymon and Kilrush.¹⁶ This network of public houses provided facilities for much clandestine activity by the IRB in Clare. In Ennis, senior members of the IRB posted cadets (or young boys) outside public houses in order to notify the approach of the constabulary.¹⁷ These members of the IRB utilised

¹² CBS, 7496/S (23 October 1893).

¹³ *KH*, 6 November 1879.

¹⁴ Lynn Abrams, *Workers' Culture in Imperial Germany: Leisure and Recreation in the Rhineland and Westphalia* (London, 1992) pp 65- 66.

¹⁵ Census 1891, Microfiche 23, *Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 88; Newspaper reports however, give a different view, putting the number of public houses in Ennis as 100 in 1894 and 108 in 1900 - or one to every fifty-five people. *LL*, 22 October 1894, 24 October 1900.

¹⁶ In 1891 there were two hundred and two innkeepers, hoteliers and publicans in the county, most operating in the districts of Kilrush (48), Ennis (39) and Ennistymon (33), but also in Tulla (18), Kildysart (16), Scariff (12), Ballyvaughan (11) and Corofin (8).

¹⁷ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 9 December 1902, 28005/S

the network of lane ways and bow-ways in Ennis to evade the constabulary. If their approach was signalled, an alternative route was taken through the narrow laneways to another public house. In these public houses members of the IRB discussed politics, spreading their ideas not just among the activists, but among the customers they met. This was part of a deliberate recruiting drive, as many of these IRB members discussed Irish history and political figures, ranging from Emmett and Lord Edward to the Manchester Martyrs to ‘test’ the suitability of potential members.¹⁸ The agrarian debate was also discussed in the public houses. On bustling fair and market days, public houses in the towns were crowded with farmers from rural areas who discussed local incidents concerning land issues and politics.¹⁹ The public house provided similar opportunities for political discussion and debate on election days, and thus became a popular recruiting ground for political causes and provided a space where members discussed or in other instances, disputed, the political merits of their chosen candidates.²⁰

Public houses were pivotal in bringing together, even briefly, the interests of the working and middle and farming classes who frequented them. What was true of late eighteenth century America was equally true of nineteenth century Clare: public houses did not have any social hierarchy; here prosperous and the less affluent were brought together in ‘conditions of enforced intimacy’.²¹ This intimacy, coupled with alcohol, allowed men to abandon any inherent social constraints and develop new social and political relationships.²² Since drinking as a pastime was primarily male, such drinking sociability reinforced male solidarity.²³ Its intimacy, in addition to its ability to attract men of different political opinions and social backgrounds in a convivial atmosphere, meant that the public house was a well known recruiting ground for land agitators and political activists. This type of public house conviviality became part of the fabric of Fenianism in some areas.²⁴ Many members of the IRB in North Clare were sworn in at

¹⁸ CBS, 296/S (14 April 1890).

¹⁹ *CI*, 2 July 1881.

²⁰ *Controverted Elections (Judgements): Return of Shorthand Writers Notes of Judgements at Trial of Election Petitions, 1892-1893*, H.C. LXX, p. 19; *CJ*, 4 January 1892, 8 December 1893.

²¹ Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Tavern going and public life in eighteenth century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1999) p. 3.

²² David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (North Carolina, 1995) p. 2.

²³ Abrams, *Workers Culture in Imperial Germany*, pp 65-66.

²⁴ R.V. Comerford, ‘Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid 1860s’, *Irish Historical Studies* (September, 1890) p. 10.

the back of Thomas Hanly's public house in Carrowcrackeen, Corofin.²⁵ This pub was probably selected because of – amongst other things – its central location (at the intersection of five roads), and the personality and sympathies of its proprietor. The magistrate at Ennis District Court attributed much of the moonlighting and land related crimes in the countryside to publicans 'who allowed such persons to assemble and plot mischief in their places'²⁶. Although there is no traceable connection between individual publicans and the actual commission of moonlighting outrages, many publicans were members of the IRB, and even when they were not, their evidence was pivotal in providing the necessary alibis for suspects concerned in local land disputes and outrages.²⁷ This was often for practical reasons: as Takagami has shown in the Dublin context the tendency for Fenians to congregate in public houses in the 1860s encouraged many publicans to become Fenians because it was good for business.²⁸ Whatever the owner's sympathy, public houses were pivotal in furthering the underground agrarian network and played a central part in the preparation that went into the commission of outrages. According to one informant, the leader of a moonlighting gang in O'Callaghan's Mills, near Ennis, asked

if he had any money, and witness then replied he had some, and McInerney then said he should never be short of money, and told him to have a pint of whiskey the fourth night after, when they would meet at the four roads at Maryfort Cross, to go to shoot Carter's horse, which was grazing on the evicted farm of James O'Halloran.²⁹

Public houses allowed meetings to be held, conspiracies to be planned, oaths to be administered, and for men involved in commission of outrages, alcohol provided courage at a cheap price. Drink was often used to coax even the most unlikely men into support for popular causes. When members of the militia showed signs of disloyalty in Ennis following the outbreak of the Boer War, police ascribed it to a 'deliberate plot carried out by local extremists' in the town 'who make the men drunk, excite them with disloyal suggestions and then urge them to shout for Kruger'.³⁰ Thus, in late nineteenth century Clare, the public house and the activities which it permitted, made it a popular

²⁵ *CJ*, 14 August 1882, 3 May 1883.

²⁶ *CJ*, 10 April 1893.

²⁷ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 7 September 1901, 25603/S; *CJ*, 16 November 1890.

²⁸ Takagami, 'The Dublin Fenians', p. 89.

²⁹ *CJ*, 22, 29 January, 9 March 1891.

³⁰ CO904/70, Reel 36, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', February 1900

location where information and news was exchanged, relationships were formed, and political opinions were encouraged and shaped.

Mirroring developments in contemporary provincial France in and around the tavern, inn or café, there grew clubs, associations or circles in great variety.³¹ These clubs and associations as in other European countries were primarily urban in character and composition and drew mainly on the population of urban regions where there was a tradition of organised sociability. Most of these clubs were established in the decades of the 1880s and 1890s, coinciding with the emergence of an affluent Catholic bourgeoisie. In Clare, clubs and societies were most numerous in towns such as Ennis and Kilrush, which had, in the period 1880 to 1900, an Odd Fellows, branches of the Irish National Foresters, Young Ireland Societies, Temperance societies and bands, '98 Clubs, and an Independent Club. There was also a small sprinkling of '98 and Young Ireland Clubs and Societies in the smaller satellite towns of Miltown Malbay with a population in 1891 of roughly 1,261, Ennistymon (1,200), Broadford (144), Lahinch (257), Killaloe (1,079), Scariff (599) and Quin (179) and the parishes of Kilmaley (2,571) and Carron (447).³²

Members of these clubs were primarily drawn from the Catholic bourgeoisie and were what has been termed: 'men in the middle'.³³ For example, in the Ennis Young Ireland Society (1892-1896), of the sixteen analysed out of possible membership of thirty-two, the majority were men of some degree of property. This included a solicitor, five publican/grocers, one farmer, merchants (including two master tailors, one master baker and a flour merchant), artisans (two blacksmiths, one plasterer, and one coach builder) and a hardware shop assistant. They generally fell within the age cohort of between thirty and forty years and were almost all residents of the town.³⁴

³¹ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, p. 268.

³² *Guy's Directory*, 1893; *LL*, 1 November 1897, 26 January, 18, 21 February, 22 July 1898; CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 22 January 1898, 15274/S, 7 March 1898, 15628/S, 24 March 1898, 15983/S; Census 1891, Microfiche 22, *Census of Ireland 1891: Part One: Area, Houses and Population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion and education of the people Volume II Province of Munster, No 1: County Clare*, p. 25, 34.

³³ Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries*, p. 13.

³⁴ *CJ*, 28 July 1892, 23 January, 20 March 1893, 26 March, 19 November 1894, 23 March, 1895, 7, 12, October 1896.

The Lahinch and Miltown Malbay Young Ireland society while similar in aims and political nature to the Ennis branch appeared to have attracted those of a lower social class. While Ennis seems to have attracted a more affluent membership i.e. publicans, shopkeepers, solicitors, the branches in the small country towns of Miltown Malbay and Lahinch were composed of and represented primarily by labourers and artisans. Of the records available for twelve of the nineteen possible members in Lahinch, the number of 'labourers' and 'householders' outweighed any other occupation in the group (6), followed by artisans (3), a publican (1), farmer's son (1) and postman (1). In general, they all lived within a few doors of each other in Lahinch town, and were young men, generally within the age cohort twenty to thirty years, the eldest being forty-nine years of age.³⁵ The majority of the sixteen members listed for the Miltown Malbay Young Ireland Society were artisans (including a cooper, blacksmith, harness maker, tailor, baker and linen-weaver) along with a small representative group from outside the town coming from an agricultural background (two farmers and a herdsman) and a small sprinkling of traders and professionals (including a commercial traveller, doctor, hotel-keeper, two shopkeepers and a grocer). Most of the men were in their twenties and thirties, but there were also a proportion of older men in their forties and fifties, the eldest being seventy years of age.³⁶

Unlike towns such as Miltown Malbay and Lahinch, each with only one conspicuous organisation (i.e. the Young Ireland Society) which each survived for just over a year, towns such as Ennis had a number of societies in operation from the 1880 to 1900. It appears from a preliminary analysis that Ennis clubs were different from those of other county towns, seeming to have recruited individuals according to their social status rather than their political sentiment. This was the view of many observers in the county from the 1880s onwards, who noted that men in the town were very conscious of their class and were inclined to associate according to their status in society.³⁷ In Ennis, the Irish National Foresters, whose membership overlapped significantly with that of the Young Ireland Society, comprised a socially respectable cohort of men, and although a complete membership list is unavailable the most conspicuous figures in the

³⁵ *LL*, 23 October 1895.

³⁶ *LL*, 23 October 1895, 22 January 1896.

³⁷ Arensberg and Kimball, *Family and Community*, pp 316, 317, 322; Becker, *Disturbed Ireland*, p. 166.

organisation were, a law clerk, solicitor, cattle dealer, cart maker, grocer/publican and shopkeeper's assistant, while the branch was chaired by a clerk of the Ennis markets, Patrick McInerney, who was also head centre of the IRB for Clare. This make-up differed from membership of the local Temperance Society, which was presided over by a butcher, while most of whose rank-and-file were artisans, who lived in poor housing – and were residents of the lane ways in Ennis. In comparison to their counterparts in the countryside, labourers and artisans were under-represented in the Irish National Foresters and Young Ireland Society. In Lahinch, the president of the Young Ireland Society was a labourer in the town, and while his status was much lower, he presided over some publicans and clerks who made up the committee, while a cooper occupied a senior position alongside a clerk and a doctor in the Miltown Malbay Young Ireland Society. That the Young Ireland society in Ennis later affiliated with a Workingmen's Club (a committee of eight tradesmen and eight labourers) in 1897, is in itself is an indicator that up until this point this social class was still under represented in these societies.³⁸ Then its timing coincided with the Local Government Act, when the labouring vote provided a real factor in influencing the new complexion of the county councils.³⁹

While the aims of these clubs were charitable, literary or religious, the bodies were from the onset quite politicised. They were unofficial political circles, where members met and debated local and national political events and discussed party politics and elections. Members were nationalist in their political sympathies – which varied from 'radical' to constitutional – but despite varying ideologies, all were intimately bound up in defending and mobilising support in the interests of the Parnellite faction from 1891 onwards. In this period, Irish National Foresters Clubs and Young Ireland

³⁸ *LL*, 12 October 1896,

³⁹ Patrick McInerney (IRB county centre) was elected chairman of the Clare County council in 1899 and P.J Linnane (whom the police considered suspect) was elected chairman for the Urban Council. Both men were members of the Ennis Workingmen's Club, YIS and GAA, while also actively involved in canvassing the labouring vote championing local labouring grievances such as the necessity for proper housing and securing road-contracting work. CO904/184, Reel 111, 'Local Government Elections and notes on Individuals political stance', Numerical Return of results of County Borough and Urban District Council Elections; *LL*, 29 May, 6 December, 1899. CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 6 May 1899, 19257/S; CO904/184, Reel 111, 'Local Government Elections and notes on Individuals political stance', Numerical Return of County and District Councillors reported by the Crime Special Branch RIC to belong to the Irish Republican Brotherhood; CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 22 March 1899, 18948/S

Societies were conspicuous for their involvement in political campaigns.⁴⁰ Both these clubs attended and sometimes organised Manchester Martyr and Parnellite demonstrations and their electioneering abilities played a significant part in securing the return of William Redmond, Parnellite candidate for East Clare in 1892.⁴¹ What was perhaps more significant was the way in which the original aims of some societies were totally abandoned in favour of purely political aims. By 1894, for example, the Ennis Temperance Club had dropped all pretence of ever being religious and was now openly Parnellite in its political affiliations, attending demonstrations in conjunction with other clubs in the town.⁴² Since no clergyman could be found or permitted to share its political views, the club decided to shed its religious image, eventually coming under the ban of the local hierarchy for acting for many years without the guidance of a spiritual director.⁴³

But while the popular societies all had the same broadly nationalist political affiliations – some manifested a more radical or extreme political ideology than others. Like other branches in the county, the branch of the Young Ireland Society in Miltown Malbay was considered to be a ‘secret society’ and was censured by the local clergy.⁴⁴ It was the most radical of its urban counterparts and considered to be run entirely on ‘extreme lines’ and almost entirely in the interests of local IRB men.⁴⁵ While it concerned itself with political issues concerning the Parnellite faction, it was on most issues, concerned with the running of the IRB generally, and issues relating to the Supreme Council in Dublin and its sister networks abroad. In fact it could be considered more of an IRB circle than a literary club, and in some instances it was difficult to differentiate the actions and characteristics of one from the other. The literary society was broken up in May 1896, one of the reasons being that members of the club were divided due to a split which had occurred within the IRB, that had precipitated the formation of a rival branch, the INA.⁴⁶ Some days later, a meeting of the IRB organisation in the town was broken up due to a disorderly dispute relative to the respective merits of James Stephens

⁴⁰ *CJ*, 26, 29 September, 3, 6 October 1892.

⁴¹ For an example see, *LL*, 22 January 1896; *CJ*, 19 September 1889, 26, 29 September, 6 October, 8 December 1892, 23 January 1893, 19 November 1894.

⁴² *LL*, 7 October 1896; *CJ*, 5 February 1891.

⁴³ *LL*, 29 October 1897.

⁴⁴ CO/903/5 p. 60; *CJ*, 28 July, 26, 29 September, 3, 6 October 1892.

⁴⁵ CO/903/5 pp 44-45

⁴⁶ CO/903/5 pp 44-45,

and John O'Mahony as potential leaders of the Fenian organisation thirty years previously.⁴⁷ It was apparent then, that such clubs were quite politicised in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and were instrumental in both reflecting and spreading the political views and divisions of the day.

The convivial atmosphere of these clubs made members more susceptible to nationalist sentiment. Social excursions were pivotal in facilitating the spread of nationalism throughout Europe, and served as a means by which members could identify themselves with their supposed national community.⁴⁸ These excursions facilitated the development of an intimate bond between the territory and its inhabitants, which was a crucial component of all nationalisms.⁴⁹ Clare fitted this pattern. The Ennis Irish National Foresters staged one of their annual excursions to the O'Callaghan estate in Bodyke, sometime after the highly publicised 1881 evictions.⁵⁰ By choosing the site of Ballynahinch, on the O'Callaghan estate, the Irish National Foresters symbolically acknowledged and identified with those who were involved in the land agitation in the area. They were accompanied on the grounds by James Whelan, a steward on the Colonel O'Callaghan estate in Bodyke and member of the IRB who had recently been released after his arrest under the Coercion Act.⁵¹ Members commended Whelan on his conduct, commenting in the local press that 'his urbanity called for as much praise when within the four white walls of a suspect's cell as it does now among the bounds of Eden'.⁵² The trip itself served to associate local identity with popular nationalism, especially as the excursionists were escorted throughout the trip by Whelan, who was knowledgeable regarding the area's local history, particularly from a nationalist point of view.⁵³ This idea of travelling to places and sites of nationalist significance was important in reinforcing the identification of nationalists. With the politicising end in mind, trips further afield were organised by the 1798 centenary club in Kilrush (called the Henry Joy McCracken Club) which served to educate its members on the more

⁴⁷ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 21 May 1898, 11913-S.

⁴⁸ Daniele Conversi, *The Basques, The Catalans and Spain: Alternative routes to nationalist mobilisation* (London, 1997) p. 134; Emily D Johnson, *How St. Petersburg learned to study itself: The Russian Idea of Kraevedenie* (Pennsylvania, 2006) p. 107.

⁴⁹ Conversi, *The Basques*, p. 134.

⁵⁰ *CI*, 9 August 1884.

⁵¹ *CJ*, 16 February 1882; CBS, 1224/S; CO904/18, Reel 8, 'Register of Suspects I-J', James Whelan.

⁵² *CI*, 9 August 1884.

⁵³ Thomas J. Westropp, 'County Clare Folktales and Myths III', *Folklore* (Sept., 1913), p. 376.

distant past, by taking a visit to Killala, Co. Mayo, the scene of the French landing one hundred years previously.⁵⁴

As part of the activities of these clubs, lectures, speeches and debates were held, which like the excursions, promoted partisan versions of Irish history. Irish rebellions and uprisings were depicted as ‘one ongoing struggle of nationalist dimensions’ and presenting conflated nationalist histories of the past, linking the arrival of the Danes, the plantations of Queen Elizabeth, the invasion of Cromwell to the battle at Fontenoy, events of 1798, 1848 and 1867 to one long nationalist struggle.⁵⁵ This interpretation of the past played a pivotal role in the spread of political ideas and was utilised by enthusiasts in both the IRB and Young Ireland Society to ‘inspire the people into manly action’, or at the very least, to instil in them pride and admiration for their country.⁵⁶ In Broadford in 1885, members of the Young Ireland Society read papers on Wolfe Tone for the assembled membership, the conclusion of which resulted in ‘the whole meeting rising and cheering the dead patriot’s name’ and, in the long term, encouraging amongst the membership a greater identification and imagined continuity with the militant past.⁵⁷ The chairman of the Lahinch Young Ireland Society, a labourer named John Queally, informed members that the branch ‘maintained’ the ‘policy’ of the ‘valiant patriots’ who fought in the Confederate rebellion of 1848. Anyone ‘wishing to become a member must be actuated by the same motives, animated by the same spirit, and if necessary, die for the same object’.⁵⁸ Recent rebellious failures became part of the ongoing ‘struggle’ which applauded masculine ‘bravery’ and strength. At a meeting of the Irish National Foresters, Patrick Considine (law clerk) told members: ‘You remember ‘67...and the bravery displayed by the men whenever they met an English soldiery, steel was stronger than brave hands, but still the struggle was nobly terminated, for they never wavered in the prison or on the scaffold.’⁵⁹ The teaching of such partisan accounts of Irish history, with a reappraisal of Ireland’s militant past and

⁵⁴ CBS, 15200.

⁵⁵ *CI*, 4 December 1873, 21 February 1885. Thomas Flanagan, ‘Nationalism: The Literary Tradition’, In Lawrence John McCaffery and Thomas E. Mackey (eds), *Perspectives on Irish Nationalism* (Kentucky, 1989) p. 56.

⁵⁶ Thomas Flanagan, ‘Nationalism: The Literary Tradition’, p. 56.

⁵⁷ *CI*, 14 March 1885.

⁵⁸ *LL*, 23 October 1895.

⁵⁹ *CI*, 21 February 1885.

the glories of past failure, encouraged the development of Irish nationalist sentiment in the rural areas and small provincial towns where such lectures were held.

Like the socialising of the public house, these clubs and meetings were quite convivial, facilitating friendly interaction and political discussion in conjunction with plentiful supplies of alcohol. As a newspaper commented in relation to the Irish National Foresters, ‘claret and whiskey and brandy and gin, and brandy and whiskey and claret again, went around and were quaffed amid speeches and songs’.⁶⁰ The nature of such social activity permitted the dissemination of political sentiment. In between the speeches and lectures, popular nationalist and old Irish melodies such as ‘Father O’Flynn’ and ‘Rich and Rare’ were sung.⁶¹ Meetings convened to the anthem ‘God Save Ireland’ and toasts were given to ‘Ireland a Nation’ and to ‘the prosperity of Ireland’.⁶² Portraits of Daniel O’Connell – with the caption ‘The Liberator’ – and national flags adorned the walls.⁶³ At the social excursions to areas of historic interest, from Bodyke to Killalla, members were not only educated on their local and national past, but were also entertained with refreshments, music and dance.⁶⁴ This type of recreation facilitated the spread of advanced political attitudes – porter was mixed with patriotism and served as a ‘melting pot where different grades of men rubbed shoulders’ and nationalist ideas spread.⁶⁵

Demonstrations also afforded opportunities for recreation and facilitated the dissemination of popular attitudes through pastime. According to Weber, many of those who participated in such forms of political agitation perceived them as a ‘gigantic holiday and adventure’ and this appears to be the case of Clare in 1869, when news of O’Donovan Rossa’s election victory signalled a number of spontaneous, and in some instances, organised celebrations throughout town and countryside.⁶⁶ These events were flamboyant occasions, where the local population was invited to illuminate their houses

⁶⁰ *CI*, 21 February 1885.

⁶¹ *CI*, 21 February 1885.

⁶² *CI*, 26 January 1884, 21 February 1885.

⁶³ *CJ*, 23 January 1893.

⁶⁴ *CI*, 9 August 1884.

⁶⁵ Cronin, *Country, Class and Craft*, p 150.

⁶⁶ Eugen Weber, *Revolution? Counter revolution? What Revolution?*, *Journal of Contemporary History* (April, 1974) p. 8.

and gather in their respective towns and villages to celebrate the old Fenian's return as MP for county Tipperary. The event witnessed the participation of large numbers of people throughout the vicinities in which they were staged. This was partially because individuals were forewarned that if they did not join in on the proceedings, their actions would incur the ire of the local community and in retaliation, windows would be broken. Accordingly, this had the desired effect of encouraging the turnout of greater number of people turned out than was expected.⁶⁷

In several country towns and in three urban centres, large crowds of up to four thousand people gathered to celebrate the event. The event was first signalled in Ennis at seven o'clock on the evening of O'Donovan Rossa's return, and from there some few minutes later, to Newmarket, where crowds 'fixed a torch light on a hill for further exhibitions of feeling throughout the country'.⁶⁸ The next morning, crowds were mobilised in centres as far apart as Scariff, Broadford, Ennistymon, Lahinch, Kilfenora, Tulla, Kilrush and Feakle. The event was organised and marshalled by lower middle class individuals, in Ennis, mostly artisans who composed the Ennis Trades; in Scariff it was a local 'writing master' who rallied the crowds.⁶⁹ Most of these men were Fenian in their political affiliations and what the constabulary identified as men already 'known to the police'.⁷⁰ The majority of those who participated in such events were 'young men', but young women were also present.⁷¹

The demonstrations assumed large proportions in the various towns in which they were held, and were large scale flamboyant events that local individuals in their respective parishes had been planning and preparing as a way to gather crowds for some time. It was noted that the Broadford demonstration was being planned for almost a week (well before it could have even been predicted O'Donovan Rossa would win the election!) while, in the case of Scariff, the event was planned during mass the following day. The events appealed to the local population because they were exciting: a poster displayed outside the chapel door in Scariff, called on the people of the district to attend the

⁶⁷ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5263R; Claire Murphy, 'Varieties of Crowd Activity from Fenianism to the Land War, 1867-1879', in Peter Jupp and Eoin Magennis (eds), *Crowds in Ireland, c 1720-1920* (New York, 2000) p. 177.

⁶⁸ Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/5, 28 November 1869.

⁶⁹ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5300R; Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/5, 28 November 1869.

⁷⁰ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5300R.

⁷¹ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5300R; Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/5, 28 November 1869.

festivities, 'where a blazing tar barrel would be carried through the town in honour of O'Donovan Rossa'.⁷² With the intention of rallying large crowds, these processions were held in central areas, through principal streets, on hill sides and in the centre of the towns and villages. In most cases news of one demonstration had a domino like effect. In Scariff, the demonstration which had begun at 5pm was reinforced by young men who joined the demonstration from Bodyke at 10pm, and so on.⁷³

Crowds that participated in these demonstrations were entertained with a multitude of colourful displays and attractive exhibitions. Tar barrels were carried by the processionists throughout the towns, adding to the carnival-like atmosphere as they wound through the principal streets in the dark. Houses within the vicinity and surrounding countryside were illuminated, showing that the celebration had the capacity to provoke interest across various communities. Colourful banners, flags and emblems sported by the local populace heightened the atmosphere of the event and also identified them with popular causes. In Kilfenora, the 250 people who turned up wore green scarves, and were led by two flags, one of which the words 'Remember Crowley' and the other 'liberation'.⁷⁴ In Ennis, the flags of the Ennis Trades led the procession, rallying the crowds.⁷⁵ Bands and music enlivened the proceedings, in Newmarket-on-Fergus and Ennis bands turned out to lead demonstrators, while in Kilfenora and Lahinch crowds followed fiddle players whilst singing national airs such as 'Tramp, Tramp, Tramp', 'O'Donnell Abu' and 'God Save Ireland'.⁷⁶ These celebrations and festivities carried on till the early hours in some instances. In Scariff the demonstrations began at 5pm and lasted until nearly midnight.⁷⁷ In Ennistymon it was reported that 'they afterwards got a lighted tar barrel on a hill in a field at the end of the town where they continued cheering, and singing, 'God Save Ireland', and other songs about one hour afterwards'.⁷⁸

⁷² Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5300R.

⁷³ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5300R.

⁷⁴ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5097 R

⁷⁵ Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/5, 28 November 1869.

⁷⁶ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5097 R; 5081R,

⁷⁷ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5300R.

⁷⁸ Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/5, 28 November 1869.

In all instances, the demonstrators showed identification with the event. Cheers were given for ‘O’Donovan Rossa’ and popular Fenian leaders.⁷⁹ In Kilfenora, cheers were given by the crowds for O’Donovan Rossa, Luby, Leary, the Manchester Martyrs and groans for the three that hanged them’.⁸⁰ Popular animosities were directed against those who did not participate in the event. In Lahinch, a woman had her windows broken after she refused orders to illuminate them.⁸¹ In Tulla, windows were broken in six houses, while in Newmarket-on-Fergus, near the home of the Protestant vicar, they attached a pole to the ground, and upon it fixed a burning torchlight.⁸² In Ennis, since the crowd was much larger, its capacity for damage was much worse and overall, forty-three panes of glass were broken in the town, including the homes of magistrates, Presbyterian clergymen, Justices of the Peace, and on the premises of the *Clare Journal*.⁸³ All of these people were loyal residents of the town, who perhaps did not take kindly to the suggestion that their homes should be illuminated for O’Donovan Rossa. In Ennistymon and Scariff, this animosity was also channelled against local authorities. Two panes of glass were broken in the homes of loyal shopkeepers in Ennistymon; while groans were given for the constabulary.⁸⁴ The route taken by processionists in Scariff, while celebratory on one level, was also deliberately designed to intimidate those who did not share their opinions. Crowds of up to five hundred, in a town whose population barely exceeded six hundred, marched up and down the town where they threw stones in the homes of loyal inhabitants and the constabulary, and marched outside the suburbs of the town where they lit a torch outside the parish priest’s house to ‘dare him and insult him’ for his recent attempts to prohibit the demonstration.⁸⁵ All of these attacks, carried out against a wide range of individuals and religious groups, were all with one objective only. This was to provoke and encourage a greater participation in these communities in which they were staged.

With these ends in mind, agitators attempted to encourage displays of support for the French throughout towns and villages following the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian

⁷⁹ Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/5, 28 November 1869.

⁸⁰ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, Fenian Papers, 5097 R

⁸¹ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5081R, Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5081R,

⁸² Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/5, 28 November 1869.

⁸³ Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/5; *The Nation*, 4 December 1869; *The Nation*, 4 December 1869.

⁸⁴ Inchiquin Papers, ms, 45, 436/5, 28 November 1869.

⁸⁵ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5300R.

War in July 1870. Responding to the news, a demonstration was held in Ennis by the Trades the same month, expressing sympathy ‘with the emperor and people of glorious France in the present war with Prussia’.⁸⁶ Two months later, (5 September), a demonstration was also staged in Miltown Malbay where crowds ‘were more or less excited’ ‘in consequence of the intelligence of the defeat of the French’.⁸⁷ Another demonstration was held some few days later, (14 September) in Kilrush, following the republic’s declaration of renewed war against the Prussians.⁸⁸ Crowds reacted and responded in various ways to these events. In Ennis, the demonstration was of a religious nature, and although resolutions were read by the clergy and the religious element of the war while not verbally emphasised, it was still very much apparent, that this was a Catholic nationalist demonstration. However, in Miltown Malbay and Kilrush, these demonstrations did not take on a religious dimension, and were far more flamboyant militant displays that mobilised approximately four thousand people in both towns.⁸⁹

While reaction to the war might have provoked various responses, they were all important and almost celebratory events for rallying the local population. In Ennis, the Trades staged a colourful demonstration through the town – complete with bands, banners and displays – with the intention of rallying large crowds to the event. The most noticeable part of the display was ‘the French flag, surmounted by the eagle, which was borne in front by two stalwart sons of toil’.⁹⁰ Crowds were drawn to the event by the variety of musical entertainments, ‘God Save Ireland’ was sung by the crowd and national airs were performed by the band.⁹¹ Those who attended the celebrations were often drawn to the town, not simply for the event itself, but for the opportunity it afforded for chatting. Speaking of a demonstration held in Ennis some months previous, one commentator observed that most attended ‘for amusement...there was, I am sure, a great number of people of both sexes gaily dressed whose greatest motive for being present was to see each other’.⁹² These social events and occasions

⁸⁶ *CJ*, 1 August 1870.

⁸⁷ *CJ*, 9 March 1871; *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 February 1871

⁸⁸ *CJ*, 9 March 1871

⁸⁹ *CJ*, 9 March 1871; *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 February 1871

⁹⁰ *CJ*, 1 August 1870.

⁹¹ *CJ*, 1 August 1870.

⁹² Fenian Papers, Box Nine, 4927R.

drew large numbers of people into the town for the day, where shops and businesses were thriving, and people congregated on the main streets.⁹³

Crowds that gathered to support the French side in the Franco-Prussian war in Miltown Malbay were also drawn with the intention of attending a social event. This was a circus, which was arranged for that evening, and which had drawn large numbers of ‘country people’ from as far as Kilkee. However, the intended event came to an abrupt stop, when some of those attending identified as a Prussian emblem a flag of blue, white and red stripes which was carried by the performers. The event quickly escalated into violence, with crowds attacking circus entertainers, burning their tents and carriages, and throwing the fleeing circus performers off horses and carriages while telling them to ‘give up the flag’. These flags were an important part in the crowd’s identification with popular causes. In order ‘to pacify the crowd’, a green flag was procured, hoisted on a pole and carried through the town on a horse, adding to the intensity and drama of an already very dramatic event.⁹⁴ Attracted by the publicity which these events stirred, crowds were also drawn to Kilrush some days later where, according to the local policeman, they had gathered some time before the procession was to take place. The demonstration which was staged at midnight, witnessed large crowds being led in processional order through the town by a blind fiddler – an event which the authorities summarised as ‘a case of the blind leading the blind’. The event drew parallels with a display some few months previously in Ennis, where those who were arrested for marching to national airs played by a fiddler, admitted that they were ‘three sheets to the wind’ after having spent the evening in the public house.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, despite the lateness of the hour, the Kilrush procession was a popular one, with crowds singing, the ‘Green Flag flying before the US’, ‘God Save Ireland’ and ‘O’Donnell Abu’ drawing the attentions of others who attended.⁹⁶

This crowd, who marched in military order, was identified by the authorities as a gathering of Fenians. In Kilrush the leader of the procession used military instruction and drill understood by the policemen present, such as ‘right centre’ ‘centre march’,

⁹³ Diary of P.J. Dillon, Ennis, ms 23,423, 11 June 1864.

⁹⁴ *CJ*, 9 March 1871.

⁹⁵ *CJ*, 11 May 1869.

⁹⁶ *CJ*, 11 May 1868, 9 March 1871.

‘left march’.⁹⁷ In Ennis, crowds attending the pro-French demonstration were also told to march in military fashion.⁹⁸ However, while such displays, as in some areas of Western and Eastern Europe and in India, could be considered a popular manifestation of ‘somatic nationalism’ it was on the other hand, also a part of the cult of male physical fitness then sweeping across the continent and from this stance was perceived as a socially acceptable ‘manly activity’.⁹⁹ As Comerford has shown such types of drilling had a strong social element for those groups of young men involved, who discovered personal identity and achievement through group display.¹⁰⁰ Whether the drill was utilised for recreation or for Fenian purposes, on a practical level, it did succeed in enforcing the order, conformity and complicity of the crowd which was at all of these events, directed and mobilised for popular causes. In Ennis, crowds rallied to the top of the O’Connell monument to cries of ‘God Save Ireland’. Here resolutions were read from various clergy in support of the event – an indicator of the Catholic nationalist approach the demonstration assumed.¹⁰¹ In Miltown Malbay crowds, rallied by the green flag, showed support for radical nationalist causes. A woman, sporting a blue dress in the crowd, was attacked on numerous occasions by individuals in the crowd for ‘wearing the royal blue’.¹⁰² This was also true in the case of Kilrush where, crowds, who concluding the events, gathered outside the home of the somewhat unpopular landlord Vandeleur, shouting; ‘Down with England, hurrah for the Fenians and to hell with Victoria’.¹⁰³

But such demonstrations were miniscule in comparison to the crowds that gathered in support of the Land League and National League in the 1880s. Unlike the majority of artisans, labourers and small farming classes who supported the demonstrations in 1869 and 1870, the Land League and later National League united a cross section of the local community, people of different classes (from large farmers to labourers) and both genders (both men and women were prominent) in support of the movements’ wide and

⁹⁷ *CJ*, 9 March 1871

⁹⁸ *CJ*, 1 August 1870.

⁹⁹ Joseph S. Alter, ‘Indian Clubs and Colonialism: Hindu Masculinity and Muscular Christianity’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (2004) pp 526, 525, 517.

¹⁰⁰ R.V. Comerford, ‘Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid 1860s’, *Irish Historical Studies* (September, 1890) p. 8; Takagami, ‘The Dublin Fenians’, p. 363.

¹⁰¹ *CJ*, 1 August 1870.

¹⁰² *CJ*, 9 March 1871

¹⁰³ *CJ*, 9 March 1871

varied political objectives. This, in conjunction with economic distress, witnessed organisers mobilising ‘massive crowds in the various localities to agitate on the land question’.¹⁰⁴

Building on old and new forms of communication, the land movement attracted to these almost carnivalesque events crowds from over a very wide area. Telegrams were dispatched through various towns signalling the onset of demonstrations. When a Land League meeting was held in Ennis, telegrams were dispatched throughout the countryside with immediate effect, as crowds and bands paraded the streets in Miltown Malbay and Tulla.¹⁰⁵ But old methods were used too. Messengers were dispatched throughout the countryside, gathering crowds along the way, informing them on important events connected with the Land League.¹⁰⁶ In jaunting cars and on horseback, men travelled throughout the countryside prior to the staging of demonstrations, ‘calling on the labourers in the field, the dwellers in the houses, and the travellers *en route* to rouse themselves for Ireland’s sake’.¹⁰⁷ To alert those over long distances, bonfires were lit on hill sides and in conspicuous sites throughout the countryside to mobilise support for the Land League and over one thousand men assembled on a hill on the northern side of Newmarket-on-Fergus in 1881, where several creels were turf were lit. This prompted a response the same night along the Shannon to Labasheeda (a distance of forty-two kilometres), Doonbeg (a distance of thirty-nine kilometres) and from there to west Clare peninsula where it was reported; ‘every principal hill from Doonbeg west was ablaze’.¹⁰⁸ These attempts at arousing rural mobilisation assumed the most dramatic proportions, and a National League demonstration staged in Miltown Malbay in 1885, attracted a reputed twenty thousand people within a two hundred kilometre radius. It was no exaggeration when the newspaper commented that ‘from Loop Head to Killaloe and from the woods of Cratloe to the Cliffs of Moher every household was astir’.¹⁰⁹ Crowds and deputations gathered to meet along the railway lines in Sixmilebridge and Newmarket-on-Fergus in east Clare, and travelled along the route to Ennis and from there to Miltown Malbay on the west coast, gathering momentum and

¹⁰⁴ Murphy, ‘Varieties of Crowd Activity’, p. 183.

¹⁰⁵ *CI*, 10 April 1880.

¹⁰⁶ *CI*, 13 August 1881.

¹⁰⁷ *CI*, 10 April 1880.

¹⁰⁸ *CI*, 5 February 1881.

¹⁰⁹ *CI*, 31 January 1885.

numbers as they passed various towns and villages that were illuminated and decorated to receive them.¹¹⁰ It appears that no part of the county was in any way isolated from an event which captivated most of the population's imagination.

These demonstrations were flamboyant occasions. Bands and banners decorated towns and villages throughout the countryside, where music was played and varieties of costume and dress were sported by the crowds who participated. At a Land League meeting in Tulla, members carried banners emphasising local pride – ‘remember Brian Boru’ – juxtaposed with contemporary national issues – ‘Remember Michael Davitt’.¹¹¹ Flags were borne by crowds, ‘the stars and stripes’ being the most conspicuous – a sign, as discussed earlier, of America’s growing importance in the political consciousness of the Clare population at this time. Streamers suspended from the houses, while those who joined in on the celebration wore Parnell medals, laurel leaves or green sashes. Bands playing national airs enlivened the proceedings, and the meeting was led by the Kildysart band, accompanied by a cavalcade, its riders wearing green sashes trimmed with gold lace, the pedestrians wearing green sashes.¹¹² In Miltown Malbay a Land League demonstration showed a pride of place for the national with the local: a green flag was suspended from the platform bearing the words ‘Kilnamona’ on the one side and ‘God Save Ireland’ on the other and concluded with the bands playing national airs and singing ‘God Save Ireland’.¹¹³

These songs and symbols which accompanied these demonstrations were an important part of national identification. At demonstrations held in Ennis in 1881, crowds marched through the town signing ‘Let Erin remember’ ; while in another instance, crowds were led by organisers wearing Volunteer uniforms in horse-drawn carriages adding to the drama and intensity of the event.¹¹⁴ These organisers often deliberately dramatised these proceedings to draw the attention of the local population to these events. When organizer T. S. Clery was discharged from court in 1880 for firing a gun in Quin, near Ennis, crowds gathered outside the courthouse playing ‘God Save

¹¹⁰ *CI*, 31 January 1885.

¹¹¹ *CI*, 14 May 1881.

¹¹² *CI*, 14 May 1881.

¹¹³ *CI*, 11 September 1880.

¹¹⁴ *CI*, 10 April, 25 September 1880.

Ireland'. While women rushed to the scene to shake his hand, Clery, at the head 'of a long dense column of bands with their banners, rode out of the town on a grey horse.¹¹⁵

The most significant aspect of these demonstrations was that they influenced the nature of the social gathering and popular pursuits engaged in by the local population throughout the 1880s. Markets and fairs became no ordinary event for those that attended them. Cattle that were seized for non-payment of rent, in various towns and villages, were causes for popular festivities and jocularity. In Kilrush, a cow that was seized and sold for rent attracted crowds of up to five hundred horsemen who led a procession through the principal streets of the town. These crowds carried an American flag, and wore green scarves, attracting the attention of the crowds and farmers who attended such proceedings.¹¹⁶ In Feakle, a goat seized for non-payment of rent was captured by crowds who placed ribbons on his horns, a hat on his head, and carried him off on their shoulders.¹¹⁷ In their attempts to prevent the seizure and sale of farm stock for rent in Ennis in 1881, crowds were led by a band through the principal streets of the town, before concluding at the O'Connell monument where speeches were delivered and national airs were played.¹¹⁸ Crowds who assembled in these towns often gathered on such occasion outside courthouses, where bands and banners followed the prosecuted to court amidst cheering.¹¹⁹ Perhaps the most flamboyant display was staged in Kilrush following the prosecution of an evicted woman by a local 'grabber' for trespass. Outside the courthouse, a crowd of people assembled, at the head of which were the culprits who committed the trespass (the three goats) in a car decorated with green ribbons and a flag on which was inscribed 'stick to the cause'. The crowd then cheered and commenced to sing 'God save Ireland' and 'Murty Hynes', a popular Land League song of a 'converted land grabber of county Galway, who had been induced to surrender a holding from which another tenant had been evicted'.¹²⁰

Farm labour and work, in which families and neighbours often co-operated with each other, became scenes of the liveliest celebratory-cum-protest proceedings during the

¹¹⁵ *CI*, 13 November 1880.

¹¹⁶ *CI*, 21 May 1881.

¹¹⁷ *CI*, 13 September 1881.

¹¹⁸ *CI*, 30 August 1881.

¹¹⁹ *CJ*, 6 October 1888; *CI*, 10 April, 13 November, 18 December 1880.

¹²⁰ *LL*, 15 January 1897; *New Zealand Tablet*, Volume XI, Issue 49, 4 April 1884, p. 19.

land agitation. While the work was in part laborious, it was for the most part an enjoyable festive occasion. This was the case in Ballynahinch, Bodyke, where crowds throughout east Clare attended to cut and rick hay for two farmers who were imprisoned under the Protection of Person and Property Act 1881. Identifying the nature of their work with nationalist activity, the workers, before concluding their labour, placed green flags on the hay stacks. Following lunch which was eaten in the fields, participants digested nationalist speeches which told them to continue the agitation ‘until Ireland is an independent nation’. Thus, this form of popular recreation and social gathering was an important part in the identification of nationalist ideas through the social pursuits of the Land League. After crowds ate their lunches, a procession was formed, headed by a seven year old boy and the nephew of those imprisoned, led by a local band playing national airs.¹²¹ These popular events engaged immense crowds, of up to seven thousand in nearby Carrahan, Clooney, where locals and people from south Galway, east Clare and north Clare gathered to dig the potatoes on the farm of two imprisoned suspects, Bryan and Matthew Clune. Crowds were entertained to national music while they worked, and afterwards attended a meeting held in the house. Flags and banners gaily decorated the proceedings, amongst which was an American flag and banners depicting the words; ‘Ireland for the Irish’ alongside the local ‘Bodyke forever’. Here speeches concluded with cheers for ‘A Nation once again’ and crowds marched home in the evening singing ‘God Save Ireland’.¹²²

Though this type of co-operation on farms was not altogether new, it mobilised large scale crowds in pursuit of a national objective during the period of the Land League. Crowds often gathered throughout this period to build houses for tenants who were evicted. This was the case in Ballycar, Newmarket-on-Fergus, where two thousand people attended, to erect a small hut. After its construction, a procession was formed and a march was made through Newmarket on Fergus, the men and women then formed in one column, four abreast, the horses and cars forming a line in the rear, and all marched under the Wells flag, with a highland piper at their head. As they passed through Newmarket-on-Fergus, ‘amidst the plaudits of women and children, who gathered to see their friends marching past, escorting the Wells and the people of

¹²¹ *CI*, 8 October 1881.

¹²² *CI*, 5 November 1881.

Newmarket Parishes', the capacity of such events to rally support over a large area was clear.¹²³ The nature of these activities meant that national ideas and support for the land movement was encouraged in a convivial atmosphere, and after the proceedings, refreshments were served and in some instances, 'dancing continued until morning'.¹²⁴

Races days and other popular events also became scenes of much activity during the Land League. While not as frequently as in other counties, some attempts at preventing the landed elite from engaging in hunting pursuits or 'stopping the hunt', were made throughout the 1880s – often leading to violent conflicts with the gentry who participated in them.¹²⁵ But in other instances, the nature of the land activity influenced a number of other events participated in by both young and old. Land League hunts were staged in the vicinity of North Clare and south Galway, where crowds assembled with sticks to drive game off the lands of unpopular landlords. A constable in Tubber deposed that these events attracted young men from throughout the district who 'used to meet to hunt the hare and other game'.¹²⁶ Other recreational pursuits engaged in by young men in the late nineteenth century, were also influenced by the nature of the land agitation. At a GAA match between Coore and Kilmihil, a green flag was carried by the Kilmurry Ibrickane Band displaying the slogan 'The land for the people' and 'The Plan of Campaign'.¹²⁷ In another instance, members refused to participate in a match because it was patronised by an individual who was obnoxious to the land movement. Despite the remonstrations of their priest, young men of the Coore branch of the GAA refused to play on a field in Cooraclare because they; 'would never kick a ball in a Tory's land'.¹²⁸

Other popular events took on nationalist dimensions in west Clare. Race meetings in Kilkee (such as the Strand Races) were held by a committee of local nationalists. This recreation was 'intended to be of a purely national type, with plates named 'The landlords bewail handicap plate', 'The Davitt plate' and the 'Labourers Cottage

¹²³ *CI*, 2 May 1885.

¹²⁴ *CI*, 8 October 1881.

¹²⁵ *CJ*, 20 March 1882, 4 February 1889.

¹²⁶ Hannen, James, *Great Britain: Special Commission to Inquire into Charges and Allegations against Certain Members of Parliament and Others Volume One* (London, 1888) pp 206-207.

¹²⁷ *MN*, 14 May 1887.

¹²⁸ *MN*, 6, 20 August 1887.

plate'.¹²⁹ This was also the case in nearby Doughmore, where the steeplechases assumed a national character, with each race named the 'United Ireland plan of Campaign Stakes', 'The No Drink Manifesto' and 'The Gladstone Parliament of 1887 consolation sweepstakes'.¹³⁰ Public houses where crowds gathered or attended also became the scene of discussion, and often agitation, during the Land League era. In Broadford, crowds of two hundred led by a band attacked people within a public house after a man had stated that he wished the 'Land League and fixity of tenure on the lower regions'.¹³¹ In Lahinch, a public house became the scene of popular excitement when bands and banners gathered crowds outside the door condemning the publican for his role in facilitating the police – earning him the unpopular nickname 'Paddy Snuff'.¹³² With such a close overlap between socializing and politics, it became impossible for the ordinary person at this time to disengage completely from the political agitation that was then ongoing.

But what did these demonstrations, with their carnival-type atmosphere, have on the spread of political consciousness? The actions of these crowds at these events showed signs of a growing political awareness. The crowds sported national emblems, while those who could not afford the emblems wore laurel leaves on their coats and in their hats, while the most flamboyant wore Parnell and National League memorial cards and medals.¹³³ Flags of America and Ireland were an important part in the visual construction of nationality, and such emblems sported by crowds at these demonstrations, showed a greater consciousness of events at home and abroad. Crowds at these meetings often spontaneously erupted into national airs, 'God Save Ireland', 'The Irish Brigade', the 'Wearing of the Green' and other similar songs.¹³⁴ Posters and banners, too, displayed signs of a growing nationalist collective identity with political causes, 'Parnell's policy has broken the backbone of landlordism', 'The people's rent, Griffiths Valuation', 'The Land League has spread the light' and a literary element echoing Goldsmith, Byron and Moore – 'We mean to live in the land that bore us'.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ *MN*, 9 January 1886.

¹³⁰ *MN*, 5 January 1887.

¹³¹ *CI*, 2 July 1881.

¹³² *CI*, 3 September 1881.

¹³³ *CJ*, 26 April 1888; *CI*, 3 September 1881, 31 September 1885.

¹³⁴ *CI*, 10 April 1880, 5 November 1881, 31 September 1885. *CJ*, 6 October 1888.

¹³⁵ *CI*, 25 December 1880.

Others emphasised the separatist element: in Ennis, Land League posters exhorted: ‘Remember Allen, Larkin and O’Brien’ and proclaimed ‘God Save Ireland’ while a Land League banner in Kilmaley depicted a picture of Michael Davitt with the captions ‘Down with landlordism’ and ‘Unity is strength’ interspersed with shamrocks, sunburst, wolfhound and Celtic cross.¹³⁶

The effect of these demonstrations in enforcing political attitudes was also evident in the nature of local song which, according to one newspaper was sung in some areas, by ‘all the little boys of the district and extending rapidly over wide areas’.¹³⁷ Local songs condemned those who arrested suspects in Miltown Malbay in 1881 while others lamented the arrest of William O’Brien and John Dillon in 1888.¹³⁸ Some of these songs were also influenced by and centred on the events of local demonstrations. In Kilmihil, a song referred to the conviction of three men for ‘resisting and obstructing the police’ at a demonstration in support of the Land League in 1882, while songs were also written in Miltown Malbay and on the visit of Parnell and his inauguration of the west Clare railway in 1885.¹³⁹

While the Land League and the National League demonstrations mobilised both rural and urban inhabitants in support of land tenure, the ’98 centenary movement established in most districts by 1897 attempted to instil in rural and urban crowds a shared understanding of their nationalist past. Committees were established in Kilrush, Lahinch, Ennistymon, Killaloe, Kilmaley, Ennis, Crusheen, Scariff, Carron and Clooney, some of which organised a number of demonstrations throughout the countryside and lectured to crowds on key events which occurred both locally and nationally during the uprising of 1798.¹⁴⁰ These demonstrations were staged at various

¹³⁶ *CJ*, 5 September 1887; G.A. Hayes-McCoy, *A History of Irish Flags* (Dublin, 1979) p. 177.

¹³⁷ *CA*, 28 January 1882

¹³⁸ Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 180, Cluain an Droma, Cill Muire, Brian O hUiggin, p. 539.

¹³⁹ Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 180, Annagh, Cill Muire, Mairtin O Criochain, p. 251; Maura Cotter, Marian Moran & Annette Collins, *Parish of Kilmihil*, (Shannon, 1987) p. 249.

¹⁴⁰ Even though the newspaper and police reports list 10 known branches of the ’98 club at this time, it is possible there could have been more. For example, attempts were also made to establish branches in East Clare (in Broadford, Tulla, Ogonnelloe, O’Briensbridge, Bridgetown, Portroe, etc), however there is no evidence that they succeeded in doing so. Furthermore, information on some existing clubs is scanty. *CBS*, *PIRSS*, *Carton Two*, 22 January 1898, 15274/S ; 7 March 1898, 15628/S; 24 March 1898, 15983/S;

SR, 5, 9 February 1898; *CJ*, 21, 24, March, 12, 26 May, 16, 20, 23 June 1898; *LL*, 1 November 1897, 26 January, 11, 18, 21 February, 25 March, 22 July 1898

times throughout the year 1898 to inaugurate local branches and to celebrate key events of 1798 including the anniversary of the birth of Wolfe Tone, the battles of 1798, and Vinegar Hill. These demonstrations were flamboyant displays. At the inauguration of the branch, in Crusheen, crowds present hung posters depicting slogans throughout the town, ‘Who Fears to speak’ and ‘Remember 98’.¹⁴¹ To celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Wolfe Tone, crowds that assembled in the town of Kiltrush were led by bands, banners and young men carrying blazing tar barrels, before concluding at the site of the Manchester Martyr monument (then being built) where they ‘broke out in hearty cheers for the men of 98’.¹⁴² Residents from country districts converged on the town of Ennis at the same time, where the procession was led by a procession of boys and men, bearing lighted torches and tar barrels, who marched to the inevitable ‘Who fears to speak’ before concluding at the Manchester Martyr monument.¹⁴³ Demonstrations were also staged to celebrate the battles of 1798 in the towns and villages including Lahinch, Kiltrush, Ennis, Ennistymon and Killaloe.¹⁴⁴ In Lahinch, the town was illuminated with bonfires, torches and tar barrels attracting the attendance of a ‘throng of people’ from the surrounding districts; while in Ennistymon, tar barrels and bonfires were lit on the hill tops while the band played national airs through the town and ‘cheers were given for the ’98 heroes’.¹⁴⁵ In Killaloe, the procession, led by contingents carrying national banners, marched through the principal streets of the town. The whole community joined in on the display: houses were illuminated and decorated with arches while those in the crowd carried tar barrels and blazing torches.¹⁴⁶

These events of the ’98 centenary also facilitated the spread of political attitudes, through a range of other social events and occasions.¹⁴⁷ In Killaloe it led to the establishment of a literary club, which sought to replace ‘Saxon’ literature and lay on the table ‘healthy and patriotic printed matter’ for the ‘youth of the town’.¹⁴⁸ Printed literature and ephemera in connection with the event were also circulated, including memorial flags and posters in an attempt to draw attention to these events flags were

¹⁴¹ *CJ*, 12 May 1898.

¹⁴² *CJ*, 23 June 1898.

¹⁴³ *CJ*, 20 June 1898.

¹⁴⁴ *CJ*, 26 May 1898.

¹⁴⁵ *CJ*, 26 May 1898.

¹⁴⁶ *LL*, 27 May 1898.

¹⁴⁷ Cronin, *Country Class and Craft*, pp 143-144.

¹⁴⁸ *LL*, 21 October 1898.

suspended outside the club rooms.¹⁴⁹ The centenary encouraged the staging of lectures throughout the county which encouraged the teaching of the insurrectionary past. Lectures were delivered coinciding with the event in Crusheen, according to local memory; Father O'Mara delivered to young men 'a number of lectures on the United Irishmen and on different aspects of Irish history, particularly incidents of the 1798 rebellion'.¹⁵⁰ In Ennistymon, the Father Murphy Club staged lectures on the battles of 1798 which were 'illustrated by one hundred limelight views of the United Irishmen, with Ireland's battles and battlefields', while in Ennis the topic of discussion was 'the life and times of Wolfe Tone'.¹⁵¹ The event also influenced the staging of concerts and encouraged the growing popularisation of songs which commemorated and celebrated the insurrectionary upheavals of the past. Bands played outside these committee rooms after the proceedings in Lahinch, drawing attention of the people of the district to the events.¹⁵² Concerts were held in Killaloe and Crusheen where songs in association with the 1798 such as the 'Croppy Boy', 'The Wearing of the Green', 'Memory of the Dead', and 'Shaun O'Farrell' (also known as 'Rising of the Moon') were sung.¹⁵³ In Ennis Town Hall, a concert appropriately tailored to meet the event; 'Irish Ballads of 98' provoked an enthusiastic response.¹⁵⁴ More artistic attempts at commemoration were staged in Tulla, where a 'tableaux vivant' entitled 'The rebellion of the men of 98' was staged, with 'the military appearance of the rifle and pike men' being 'greeted with much applause by the audience'.¹⁵⁵

Through their prominence in such events, organisers and speakers on the occasion attempted yet again to instil into the local populace the importance of their 'nationalist' past. At the inauguration of the '98 branch in Crusheen the main speaker, Father O'Mara, recounted both local and national events in connection with 1798 because, in his opinion, a 'good many of the Irish people were not sufficiently instructed in the history of their country'.¹⁵⁶ These demonstrations in particular, sought to reach out to

¹⁴⁹ *LL*, 18 February, 15 April, 22 July 1898.

¹⁵⁰ IRA Witness Statements, Sean McNamara, Crusheen, O/C Mid Clare Battalion, BMH.WS.1047

¹⁵¹ *CJ*, 21, 24 March 1898.

¹⁵² *SR*, 5 February 1898.

¹⁵³ *LL*, 11, March, 15 April, 18 November, 30 December 1898, 13 January 1899.

¹⁵⁴ *CJ*, 20 January 1898.

¹⁵⁵ *CJ*, 7, February 1898;

¹⁵⁶ The clergy's prominence at some of these proceedings was stimulated by Fr. Kavanagh's recent history of 1798. This history toned down the United Irish element in the Wexford Rebellion, portraying it

the youth. Orators in Ennis who gathered to celebrate the birth of Tone, told men to ‘carry home to [their] children what he had said there, and always keep before their minds the necessity of learning the history of their country’.¹⁵⁷ In particular, speakers sought to make the younger generation more conscious of what was seen as their nationalist heritage. In Crusheen, men present at the inaugural events were asked to ‘instil into the minds of the rising generation that are growing up around us ... that patriotism with which the men of ‘98 were possessed’.¹⁵⁸

The art of commemoration was very political and was as much about the present and future as it was about the past.¹⁵⁹ In inter-war France, children ‘often participated in these ceremonies in their role as future custodians of the communal memory, and in a moment that certain monuments capture, officials sometimes addressed remarks specifically to them, admonishing to respect the monument and to learn the lessons it had to offer’.¹⁶⁰ This was also apparent in Kilrush at the demonstration staged to celebrate the birth of Wolfe Tone. In the role of a teacher lecturing his pupils, Thomas Coote, ‘strongly appealed to the young men present, by fostering a live spirit of nationality amongst them to do something to prove worthy of the glorious tradition of their country’.¹⁶¹

These events were not without their effect on the young and ÓBroin’s contention that ‘the minds of the people were engrossed with parliamentary factions and the original objective, the youth of the country - was lost sight of...the ‘98 movement changed all that’ proves accurate in the context of Clare.¹⁶² The activities of the centenary succeed in instilling popular versions of the past in the minds of the younger generation. An

instead as a battle of ‘faith and fatherland’. This reconstruction of the historical events of 1798 by the clergy was with a current political end in view. By erasing the United Irishmen element from the insurrection it served to also delegitimize its contemporary expression (i.e. the IRB) and by doing so, played the Catholic clergy as the only leaders of the people; ‘Fr John Murphy, and he alone, was at the real and metaphysical heart of 1798 in Wexford’. *LL*, 9 May 1898; Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830* (1996) p. 169; James S. Donnelly, ‘Sectarianism in 1798 and in Catholic nationalist memory’, *Rebellion and Remembrance* ed. Raymond Gillespie (Dublin, 2001) pp 34, 170; Tom Dunne, *Rebellion, Memoir and Memory and 1798* (Dublin, 2004) p.105

¹⁵⁷ *LL*, 20 June 1898.

¹⁵⁸ *LL*, 9 May 1898.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel J. Sherman, ‘Bodies and Names: The Emergence of Commemoration in Inter- War France’, *The American Historical Review* (1998) p. 466.

¹⁶⁰ Sherman, ‘Bodies and Names’, p. 455.

¹⁶¹ *LL*, 5 January 1898.

¹⁶² Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 89.

attendance list for the '98 Association at Crusheen shows a significant attendance of young men at these events. Although all names could not be obtained, it appears that from the twenty-one men listed, ten were in their twenties and all generally (regardless of age) were either farmers' sons or agricultural labourers.¹⁶³ It was significant that it was this generation of young men who learned most from the commemorative events of 1798. For many, attendance at these events initiated their political involvement. Members were later prominent figures in Sinn Féin in 1907 and this is particularly true of the branches in Carron and Crusheen. Two of those present at the Crusheen demonstration were Sean O'Keeffe and Sean McNamara, one a boy of ten years, and the other aged twenty years. Both of these men, whether accurately or not, recalled in later years their attendance at the ninety-eight commemorations as being pivotal in shaping their awareness of nationhood.¹⁶⁴

But the events connected with the centenary were intended to shape the opinions and perspectives of those for much longer than anticipated. Lasting monuments in connection with the '98 and '67 movement were erected in Kiltrush town square (to the Manchester Martyrs), Balleyvalley Point, Killaloe, (to local rebel Denis Mulcahy), and Clooney graveyard (to local 1798 leader General Denis O'Duffy), which served as 'living reminders' of Clare's perceived republican heritage.¹⁶⁵ While the clergy sought to capitalise on these events of '98 through their prominence at monument unveilings in Kiltrush and Clooney, 'it was the tradition of physical force implicit in all 1798 commemoration figures which ultimately benefited the most'.¹⁶⁶ Both the monuments at Kiltrush and Clooney showed an idealised perception of the glory of physical force. Located in the middle of the Market Square in Kiltrush, the Manchester Martyr Monument, with inscriptions in French, Gaelic and English, had multiple appeals to all

¹⁶³ *LL*, 9 May 1898.

¹⁶⁴ IRA witness statements, Sean O'Keeffe, Ennis, Captain Crusheen Company Irish Volunteers, BMH. WS1261; IRA Witness Statements, Sean McNamara, Crusheen, O/C Mid Clare Battalion, BMH. WS.1047

¹⁶⁵ The Killaloe monument, which was erected in marble, near the Brian Boru fort, cannot be found. In 1949, an account of it appeared in the *Irish Independent*, when at this time it was found to be in a state of disrepair and neglect. *CC*, 1 June, 2 July 1949. The Quin monument, to General Denis O' Duffy still exists. According to local memory, O'Duffy reputedly fought alongside the rebels in Wexford and later travelled to France where he fought in Napoleons Army; Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Tuaim Fionnlocha, Ballycar, Liam MacCluin, p. 173.

¹⁶⁶ John Turpin, "1798, 1898 and The Political Implications of Sheppard's Monuments", in *History-Ireland*, spring/summer 1998, p. 48.

those who passed it. Surmounted by a statue of Erin and a wolfhound and bearing medallion portraits of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien the monument bore the words;

To the memory of the Manchester Martyrs, who were judicially murdered by a tyrannical British government on the 23rd November 1867, for their gallant rescue of Kelly and Deasy, the Fenian chiefs from the Prison van in Manchester - God save Ireland.¹⁶⁷

The memory these traditions evoked served to place local campaigns within a national context: in Clooney the Celtic cross depicted the words, 'O Duffy - Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori (or 'it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country') God save Ireland', and on the other side, 'To the memory of Denis O Duffy, of Maghera, Clooney, parish, who was ever a trusted and faithful champion of Irelands rights, and fought at Vinegar Hill in the rebellion of 1798'.¹⁶⁸ These monuments became sites which shaped and re-enforced popular political and local perceptions of the past, in the communities in which they were situated, for some time afterwards.¹⁶⁹

It was apparent that the social sphere was important in creating radical nationalist views. In the 1880s and 1890s, public houses and social clubs became an extension of the debate ongoing and allowed the discussion and circulation of political topics, which ranged from the United Irishmen, to the more recent events of the land agitation, over glasses of beer and whiskey in a convivial environment. The use of social recreation to encourage political ideas was also apparent in the nature of demonstrations particularly from the 1880s onwards, which gathered large groups together in support of nationalist causes through music, dance and song, and through various other enjoyable events these occasions permitted. All of these social arenas, served to shape, amongst its adherents and participants, a growing identification with popular causes at this time. Most important was the manner in which they sought to increasingly educate the populace. This was particularly evident through events such as the '98 centenary and clubs such as the Young Ireland Society, which sought to teach the rural and urban communities the history of their past. Through the nature of social recreation, support and sympathy for the insurrectionary heroes and the actions which they undertook, became

¹⁶⁷ *CJ*, 14 October 1901.

¹⁶⁸ *LL*, 28 December 1898.

¹⁶⁹ *CC*, 28 November 1953, 28 November 1970. Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Tuaim Fionnlocha, Ballycar, Liam MacCluin, p. 159.

increasingly instilled in the audiences at these events, which served to encourage radical nationalist ideas.

Chapter Seven: Towards twentieth century nationalism: Boers and Gaelic Leaguers

By the early twentieth century radical nationalist ideas in County Clare had become crystallised. It was particularly evident in organisations such as the Gaelic League. The new nationalism, which closely modelled its European counterparts, stressed through its focus on ethnicity and language, the idea of a collective and separate identity that was at odds with the existing state. This sense of Irishness emerging at this period was characterised not only by this opposition to the state, but also by a strong and emotional anti-Englishness. It further instilled these ideas in its members through its presentation of the events of history, glorifying dead patriots from the United Irishmen to the Manchester Martyrs and thus legitimising militancy as a means towards national independence.

But nationalist ideas such as those promulgated by the Gaelic League did not just happen. They were the culmination of a variety of factors which had operated as politicisers throughout the previous decades – increasing modernisation, the expansion of social recreational opportunities, and the occurrence of economic distress, all of which made rural and urban audiences more susceptible to political ideas. These ideas were, as already discussed, also shaped by various individuals and groups, from the IRB to those advanced nationalist clerics who exerted political influence in their respective communities. As the nineteenth century closed, the most immediate influence on these blossoming radical nationalist ideas was the Boer War, the politicising impact of which was so great that it deserves a lengthy discussion here.

On the outbreak of war in 11 October 1899, news from abroad penetrated the countryside faster than had been the case in any previous foreign conflict. Pamphlets and placards were circulated during the period and disseminated in Ennistymon, Kilrush and Ennis emanating from the Irish Transvaal Committee in Dublin. In Kilrush and Ennistymon placards were posted to deter recruiting and destroy English morale by highlighting wartime failures – ‘England’s army is small, Englishmen are not good soldiers. England has to get others to do her fighting for her’. Posters and pamphlets circulated in Ennis bore the same idea though the wording was slightly different. This literature attempted to discredit England’s military policy:

On a gallant people in South Africa, Joe Chamberlain and his bloody accomplices sought to steal a march. Proceedings like this have ever been peculiar to the people of the robber nation, for how oft have they not deprived little communities. Irishmen Remember '98, '48 and '67!¹

News of war provoked a 'good deal' of excitement and a strong display of pro-Boer sympathy in urban centres.² In an attempt to prevent the Clare militia artillery from being dispatched to the 'seat of war' crowds assembled at the station platform in Kilrush. Responding to the cheering and singing of the crowd, the military shouted for President Kruger and the Boers.³ Excitement was apparent amongst soldiers in Miltown Malbay who marched through the town carrying a green flag and shouting and cheering for Kruger.⁴ These regiments from the Eastern and Western part of the country converged on Ennis, and marched from the station into the town – evidently under the influence of drink - singing and shouting and giving cheers for 'old Kruger'. Affected by the recent British defeats in the war, an optimistic nationalist noted that 'the majority of them didn't seem likely to volunteer for the front, and one of them was heard to say, 'What men to be sending out - if Spion Kop was thrown up, we wouldn't hit it'.⁵ The military's departure generated popular enthusiasm. In Ennis, large crowds which assembled on the station platform became 'disorderly' as even the departing soldiers repeatedly cheered for Kruger.⁶

This sympathy while not as vocal in the countryside, was nonetheless profound.⁷ Interest in the war was noted to have extended to the 'disaffected class' in the countryside who followed 'the Transvaal war with keen interest and make no secret of the wish that it may afford the long hoped for opportunity of striking a blow against England'.⁸ In rural areas, the tenantry equated the actions of the Boers with agrarian resistance at home. After all, the Boers were farmers who had a deep rooted attachment to the soil. This the Irish farmer respected.⁹ Tenants on the now notorious Bodyke estate

¹ C.S.O.R.P, 1900.15483.

² CO904/70, Reel 36, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', February 1900

³ *LL*, 14 February 1900.

⁴ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 5 March 1900, 21361/S; CO904/70, Reel 36, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', February 1900

⁵ *LL*, 14 Feb 1900. The battle of Spion Kop occurred in January of 1900 and resulted in a British defeat.

⁶ *LL*, 14 Feb 1900.

⁷ Donal P. McCracken, *Forgotten Protest: Ireland and the Anglo-Boer War* (Belfast, 1989) p. 43

⁸ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Two, 14 December 1889, 20797/S.

⁹ McCracken, *Forgotten Protest*, p. 43

expressed these feelings so publicly that they alarmed the landlord, Colonel O'Callaghan, to such an extent that he expressed fears that a 'very bad feeling existed amongst the peasantry and that the more dangerous amongst them were quite ripe for a rising'.¹⁰ A large flag which was hoisted near the village of Bodyke bore the inscription 'Success to the Transvaal Republic' and was saluted with volleys of rifle shots. In the same area a piece of calico which was found attached to a pole on a ruined building bore the words 'Long Live the Transvaal Republic'.¹¹ In the west of the county these activities were replicated in Newtown West (ten kilometres south of Kilkee) west Clare, when an evicted tenant named O'Gorman displayed a white flag and on inquiry told the authorities 'in truth, it is a flag of distress - a flag which, thank god, the brave Boers know nothing about'. The flag which was seized by the authorities 'amidst the jeers and witticisms of the crowd', was later discovered to be an ordinary linen table cloth.¹² It was apparent that feelings were running high throughout the war and according to one policeman, there was 'no doubt, a good deal of sympathy with the Boers and while they were successful many were jubilant in the hope that England would be brought low'.¹³

The incidents of the war evidently formed the topic of discussion in public houses, leading to several prosecutions arising out of conflicts which were, according to one publican, 'all about the war'.¹⁴ The Anglo-Boer conflict permeated popular culture and was evident in both song and ballad. One song written in west Clare in 1900, threatened an unpopular constable, (for his actions in distaining cattle for rent), that 'Kruger with his rifle would blow him from the Queen'.¹⁵ But the war's greatest and longest influence was perhaps felt among the youth. According to police reports 'visionary schemes' were filling the minds of the young men in Clare regarding the ongoing

¹⁰ CBS, 1900, 20869/S; UCD Archives, Captain O'Callaghan Westropp Papers, P 38/1 p. 673, 674.

¹¹ CBS, 1899, 2089/S.

¹² *LL*, 22 December 1899.

¹³ CO904/70, Reel 36, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', February 1900; *LL*, 3 January, 9 March 1900; C.S.O.R.P., 1900. 15483. In Ennis, one man was summoned to court for cheering for President Kruger, while an apple woman was found to have in her possession 'seditious' Boer pamphlets. Evidently enthused by the agitation when a resolution of the Tulla Board of Guardians, was passed condemning 'certain members of the county council for stampeding from the council room when a resolution of sympathy with the plucky Boers was brought forward' a contingent of labourers with bands and banners interrupted a meeting, cheering for 'old Kruger and the Boers'.

¹⁴ *LL*, 14 June 1901.

¹⁵ Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Reel 181, Carrigaholt, Carraig an Chabhaltaigh, Brid Bean Ui Cathain, p. 265.

war.¹⁶ A twenty-five year old farmer's son and member of the Land and Labour Association told other members to adopt the stance taken by the South African insurgents: 'Let us stand together as the Brave Boers stood and fight against the enemy'.¹⁷ GAA matches were characterised by cheers and shouts for the Boers – such being the latter's popularity that the Crusheen GAA Club were named 'the de Wet's (after the Boer General).¹⁸

Late nineteenth century nationalism was encouraged by the Boer agitation and news of war had the dual effect of promoting 'sympathy throughout Ireland and ...stimulating political nationalism at home'.¹⁹ It appealed to diverse political and cultural movements and appears to either have played a part in their establishment or encouraged their continued. Popular political organisations such as the UIL, received a stimulus following the outbreak of the war. While the number of branches in the county numbered six branches and 388 members in 1898, some two years later in 1900, there were thirty-five branches and 1,769 members.²⁰ Local branch meetings gave cheers for the successes of the Boers and de Wet and groans against the actions of the increasingly unpopular British military, and particularly of General Kitchener.²¹ Resolutions of sympathy were passed by members of local UIL committees, who sympathised 'with the gallant Dutch farmers so ably fighting for freedom, and trust that success will crown their efforts'.²² Despite having opposing political views, the UIL's rival, Sinn Féin, were also encouraged by the Boer war, which shaped the opinions of activists locally. In a letter to the *Clare Champion* from a 'Sinn Féiner', the author compared the party's policy of parliamentary abstentionism with the method adopted by the Boers – 'the Boer never sent representatives to the British parliament, yet, they got a parliament of their own'.²³

¹⁶ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 21 February 1901, 24249/S.

¹⁷ CC, 6 July 1907.

¹⁸ CC, 10 August 1907; CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 23 July 1901, 25049/S.

¹⁹ Garth Stevenson, *Parallel Paths: The Development of nationalism in Ireland and Quebec* (Canada, 2006) p. 179. Senia Pasetta, *Modern Ireland: A very short introduction*, (Oxford, 2003) p. 66.

²⁰ CO904/20, Reel 8, 'United Irish League, Miscellaneous Cases', Quarterly Returns Relating to Branches, 1898-1921

²¹ CC, 11 February, 30 September, 6 November, 11 December 1901.

²² LL, 13 February 1901.

²³ CC, 24 August 1907.

The Gaelic League, too, seemed to have enjoyed a period of expansion after 1900, though whether this was as a result of political feeling generated by the Boer War is difficult to decide.²⁴ However, what is clear is that the League itself saw a parallel between Boer resistance and Irish cultural nationalism, as evident in the speech of Fr. Whelan at Ennis, who reminded the crowd that after peace was made, the Boers’

first demand in that treaty was for their language, that the fore language should be the language of the school the language of the court, and the language of parliament (Hear, Hear). That treaty remained for three days unsigned, and though they were bleeding from every pore, the Boers were prepared to take to the field again rather than give up their tongue (applause).²⁵

The type of identity which emerged both during and after the Boer War placed emphasis on the importance of ‘race’ and racial separateness, which was an essential to radical nationalism of the late nineteenth century.²⁶ The effects of this were reflected in Clare – even outside the ranks of the Gaelic League – where articles in the local newspaper featured sociological reports which stressed the distinct aspects of the ‘Irish character’ and Irish ‘racial types’.²⁷ Such theories were viewed with hostility by UIL supporters and clergy in west Clare, who, in their support of a proposed Catholic university, described existing bodies (such as Trinity and Queen’s) as ‘Godless’ and places where lectures ‘were given to one man who said that human kind were descended from monkeys (a voice -‘the Darwin theory’).²⁸ Yet while Darwinian ideas of race and identity were obviously not well received, such theories nonetheless formed an important basis of this new nationalism.²⁹ These concepts of identity were encouraged by many returned Americans in their frequent trips to and from the county throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century (as seen in chapter five), who reminded crowds of the ‘Irish cause’ and of the many ‘Irish exiles of their race’.³⁰ It also had its effects on shaping the opinions of crowds at home, who were continuously

²⁴ Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, p. 100

²⁵ *Gaelic American*, 8 August 1908; *CC*, 20 July 1908.

²⁶ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Cambridge, 1990) p. 108

²⁷ *CC*, 25 May 1907.

²⁸ *CC*, 7 December 1907.

²⁹ *CC*, 7 December 1907.

³⁰ *LL*, 20 October 1899.

informed of their links with those abroad where; ‘the gallant sons of the Irish race were there to speak for and defend that flag as best they could (cheers)’.³¹

The Gaelic League was, of course, the main exponent of this type of new nationalism, with its focus on ideas of ethnicity and racial and cultural difference.³² League meetings in Clare provided a forum for the spread of these sentiments, where speakers told crowds to be ‘proud to belong to a distinct race, with a distinct language, a distinct spirit, and with different ideas from the so-called conquering nations’.³³ Language revival (much to the annoyance of parliamentarians and many land reform campaigners) became increasingly utilised by many as the ultimate means by which political independence could be attained.³⁴ In Clare, activists like Fr. Phelan stressed the Dutch maxim, ‘no language, no nation’ and continuously encouraged boys and girls that ‘they could only expect to be free by having a desire to stand hand in hand and speak the language of their own nation’.³⁵ Ironically, the language movement, which seemed irrelevant to those concentrating on land reform and the achievement of Home Rule, was actually utilised to unite in political terms a rural and urban population, which were at that time at odds with each other politically and socially. Thus, language revival became an important political weapon for nationalist activists: it provided the tools of nation building and succeeded in providing a diverse group of people with a common identity, if only on a superficial level.³⁶

But who were these diverse groups? Both nationally and locally the Gaelic League in the county attracted Catholic and Protestant clergy, extreme nationalists, law enforcers, school teachers, farmers, modernist intellectuals and Catholic intelligentsia.³⁷ The greater proportion of the committees and branches in Clare were dominated by priests, national school teachers and farmers (many of whom were also county councillors and magistrates), while the rank-and-file were drawn from a lower, less politically established element (mostly farmers’ sons and labourers) of the twenty to thirty year

³¹ *LL*, 11 April 1900.

³² Sandra L. Suárez, ‘Does English Rule? Language Instruction and Economic Strategies in Singapore, Ireland, and Puerto Rico’, *Comparative Politics* (Jul., 2005), pp 459-478

³³ *CC*, 25 July 1903; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 112.

³⁴ *CC*, 27 July 1907.

³⁵ *Gaelic American*, 8 August 1908; *CC*, 20 July 1908.

³⁶ Suárez, ‘Does English Rule?’ pp 459-478

³⁷ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the creation of the Irish Nation State* (London, 1987) p. 151.

age cohort.³⁸ However, this was not always the case, and there appears to have been a sprinkling of farmers' sons who were elected as leaders of branches in some regions, which was perhaps in part facilitated by their closer social ties with the agricultural labourers and small farmers who comprised the rank and file. This was evident in west Clare in 1908, where the district committee appointed to oversee branches of the Gaelic League had as its president a young farm servant of thirty-five years of age.³⁹ These individuals were, like their counterparts nationally, newly (and sometimes self-) educated, politically active young men who began to take an increasing interest in the political and cultural affairs of the community.⁴⁰

The movement was particularly popular in the western and north-western regions of the county which were traditional strongholds of the language. While the League does appear to have been established first in urban centres, its membership in Clare was not entirely urban based.⁴¹ The Gaelic League in Ennis reported that crowds who attended its public meetings in the early 1900s invariably came from the countryside rather than from the towns. A concert staged in 1902 was 'well attended by people from the surrounding parishes, but not by the people of the town'.⁴² Meanwhile Ennistymon was considered the capital of the Gaelic League in Clare but the branch there drew a great number of its adherents from the satellite rural parishes and villages of Caherconlish, Moymore, Moy, Killaspugalone and Liscannor.⁴³ An analysis of the occupational backgrounds of League members in the county reflects a preponderance of rural dwellers. Of the thirty-one branches of the League analysed in the 1900 period, and the

³⁸ Of ages available for one hundred and forty-five members, there were an average of twenty members under 20 years, forty-seven members from 20 to 30 years, thirty members from 30 to 40 years, twenty-seven members from 40 to 50 years, sixteen members from 50 to 60 years, and six over 60 years. [Taken from *Census of Ireland 1901, County Clare*].

³⁹ The Coise Ceanntair [District Council] for Corca Baiscne [West Clare] was J. Hehir (35), Lack, Kilmihil, Farm Servant, and President. Delegates: Frank O'Dea (30), Cranny, Farmer's son; J. Ronan (43), Rinealon, Farmer; Simon O'Keeffe (28), Lack, Kilmihil, Farmer's son; Joseph Reidy (42) Coolmeen, farmer. Treasurer: James O'Dea (25) Kildysart, Carpenter; Secretary: Joseph O'Connor, (26) Coolmeen, Farmer's son. CC, 30 January 1908.

⁴⁰ Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, p. 102; Timothy McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893-1910* (Dublin, 2008) p. 98.

⁴¹ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798 – 1998: Politics and War* (Oxford, 1999) p. 180.

⁴² CC, 30 May 1903.

⁴³ CC, 14 February, 7 November 1903.

one hundred and forty-five members, most of the rank and file were farmers' sons and under the ages of thirty years.⁴⁴

The success of the League lay in the fact that it united a very wide and varied group, who were traditionally at odds with each other (ranging from Catholic to Protestant clergymen, herds and graziers and even farmers and landlords) in a common identification through political activity. Despite their opposition to each other politically, a reporter in Newmarket-on-Fergus observed that both the herdsman and the grazier, although being politically opposed to each other at this time, were 'all...taken on the same status by the organiser who took the lessons'.⁴⁵ An analysis of the social backgrounds of many local branches exemplifies this wide and varied background. In the Killaspugalone branch near Ennistymon, [whose president was a farmer] a committee of thirty-three included eleven farmers, seven farmers' sons, eleven farm labourers/servants [six of whom were sons of farmers'], two clerks and two schoolchildren.⁴⁶ In Creegh, some twenty miles away, the membership was also diverse containing affluent farmers, artisans and farmers' sons. Unlike other social or political organisations, there was no age limit. Most Gaelic League branches, like Creegh in west Clare, attracted men of every age and while most of those who joined were in their twenties and thirties, the oldest was in his late sixties, while the youngest was only ten years of age. As with other political organisations at this time, family ties informed some of the membership. In the Killaspugalone branch Ennistymon, Michael Finn, a farmer of forty eight years brought along his son of eight years, while the O'Donnell brothers and the sons of a farmer, Manus (26), James (22) and Edward (17) also attended. This was also apparent in nearby Creegh where a ten year old girl was brought

⁴⁴A membership list of 145 members contained, in order of prominence, Farmers' sons, farmers, farm servants/labourers (many of whom were also farmers' sons) National School teachers/monitors/assistants, trades, artisans, herds and clerks. These branches were Ballynacally, Ballyvaughan, Carron, Carrigaholt, Clarecastle, Clooney, Coolmeen, Cooraclare, Cranny, Cratloe, Cree, Crusheen, Dangan, Doonaha, Ennis, Ennistymon, Farihy, Kilbaha, Kildysert, Kilfenora, Kilnaboy, Killaspugalone, Killilagh, Kilmihil, Kilrush, Lahinch, Liscannor, Lisseycasey, Moyasta, Newmarket-on-Fergus and Quin. [Taken from *Census of Ireland 1901, County Clare*].

⁴⁵ CJ, 10 July 1902.

⁴⁶ These farmers seem to have been both middling and prosperous ranging from thirty-two years to seventy three years of age i.e. Michael O'Dwyer, aged thirty-two, (first class house, eleven out-offices), Francis Daly aged seventy-three, (third class house, three out-offices).

along by her father, Thomas Moylan, a woollen weaver in the village.⁴⁷ While mixing between social classes was observed in most of these branches, some had the capacity to take on their own particular social and gender character, In Farrihy, near Kilkee, west Clare, for example, the two branch leaders were both in their early thirties and prosperous farmers' sons and the rank-and-file were also farmers' sons, all of whom were between the ages of twenty-one to forty years.⁴⁸ This committee was the equivalent of a rural young men's club.⁴⁹ However in general, both sexes freely mixed at these branches, with women occupying senior positions as Treasurer and Secretary, often above the ranks of their male counterparts. This mixing of both male and female was also evident amongst the rank and file and Liscannor and Kilmihil had in their attendance both married women and single women from school-going age and upwards, who attended alongside their male counterparts (who were also from the same age range).⁵⁰ This was also the case in Kilnamona, North Clare, where it was reported that 'there were about forty in the class, young boys and girls, married men and women'.⁵¹ Through the auspices of the Gaelic League, it was evident that these local branches united both male and female, labourers and large farmers, young and old, in support of a common interest.

While in the big towns such as Ennis, Ennistymon and Kilrush, Gaelic Leaguers included shopkeepers, linesmen, professors, shopkeepers, bike sellers, schoolteachers and publicans, in agricultural districts the membership was comprised of a mix of labourers, herds, farm servants and farmers and their sons who occupied both poor and prosperous holdings. However, despite this seemingly diverse social mixture the language movement in Clare, like its European counterparts, drew most of its members

⁴⁷ Farmer's sons J. Nash (38) and Daniel Carey (25), Creegh (second class house, six out-offices), farmers William Killeen and Cornelius Killeen (51) (second class house, seven out-offices), Shoemaker, James McGuane (25) and Wool Weaver, Thomas Moylan (57).

⁴⁸ Michael Kett (thirty-seven years) and Joseph Kett (thirty-five years), second class house, the farm included eight out-offices (stable, two cow houses, calf house, dairy, two piggeries and a coach house).

⁴⁹ Altogether out of the nine members listed six were farmer's sons, one a tailor and farmer, one a farm servant and one a national school teacher.

⁵⁰ In Kilmihil, there were women there of every age, many unmarried, such as Miss E. Kiely, National School Teacher of fifty-three years, and the youngest, Miss Bridget Lorigan, a shopkeeper's daughter, aged twenty. In Liscannor, there were a number of married women of status, i.e. Mrs. Perry, Publican, aged thirty-nine, and young women of less affluent families, some of whom were fishermen's daughters, i.e. Miss Clair, aged twelve and Miss A. Fitzmaurice aged eleven.

⁵¹ *CJ*, 28 November 1903.

from the middle class.⁵² While labourers and artisans were among its members, their influence was nominal in comparison to the affluent middle class farming and farming son classes who almost certainly outnumbered them in membership in agricultural districts. The movement was first and foremost however, a young person's organisation in which an entire generation of young men in their twenties were put through an intense period of political education and schooling on nationhood and nationality.

The Gaelic League encouraged a range of activities and social pursuits through which nationalist ideas were promoted. In both the Gaelic League branches and within the national schools, League organisers fed school going boys and girls a diet of nationalist political ideas. At Feiseanna held each summer in Ennis and in Kiltrush, (which typically staged competitions for Irish recitation, essay composition, and performance of traditional Irish music and dance) schoolchildren were tested on topics of national interest, including Irish history. The categories included 'early Irish History', which usually covered the time-frame from the 'Danish Invasion to the Treaty of Limerick' (795AD – 1691) or from the arrival of the Normans to the Act of Union (1170 to 1800).⁵³ 'Modern history' continued this, beginning from either the 'Treaty of Limerick' or from the Act of Union 'to the present time'.⁵⁴ Such history was about the present agitation as much as about the past. For many nationalists, both the Danish Invasion and Treaty of Limerick - which represented periods of conflict and oppression by an outside aggressor - served to evoke the current agitation. Local history served to even more intimately reinforce this perception of the nationalist heritage and so prizes were offered for 'best knowledge of the history of Clare'.⁵⁵ Extracts from historical literature, analysed and recited by boys and girls, included A.M. Sullivan's, *History of Ireland, Ring of the Day* by Miss Butler and Douglas Hyde's *Literary History of Ireland*, as well as passages from newspapers such as the *Claidheamh Soluis* and the *Gaelic Journal*.⁵⁶ Young boys and girls submitted and received prizes for essays submitted in Irish on historical events from the nationalist past, from 'The Penal Laws' to 'Brian Boru' and also on topics then currently debated on the political platform

⁵² Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 122.

⁵³ *CC*, 23 February 1907.

⁵⁴ *CC*, 23 February 1907.

⁵⁵ *CJ*, 20 July 1908

⁵⁶ *CJ*, 20 July 1908; *CC*, 23 February 1907.

throughout the country, such as ‘The Sinn Féin Policy’, ‘Local Industries’, ‘The Evils of Emigration’ and ‘Our National Games’.⁵⁷

Such Irish history was actively taught by organisers in the Gaelic League and in national schools. The clergy who were actively associated in setting up League branches appealed to nationalist sentiment amongst the audiences present who were entertained to speeches which taught the linear nationalist ‘Seven hundred years of oppression’ version to students, focusing on St. Patrick, Brian Boru, and Sarsfield.⁵⁸ Encouraging enthusiasm amongst the crowds at the opening of the branch in Lisdoonvarna, Rev. John Carr referred to the final actions of Sarsfield whose last words, he stated, were ‘Oh that this was for Ireland (tremendous cheering)’.⁵⁹ Utilising more modern material to disseminate national thought in Killilagh (near Doolin), a local clergyman

Explained in full detail to the meeting the cause of the outbreak of the war in the Transvaal, and very eloquently condemned the acts of the Sassenach and Chamberlain in forcing the brave Boers to defend their dear country at the risk of life and bloodshed.⁶⁰

The activities of these branches in the main consisted of reading, singing and dancing, all of which instilled a strong nationalist ethos. Tracts ranging from Fr. Growney’s, Father O’Leary and Nora Bortwick were read by young students, which although moderate in nature, showed a disregard for the ‘foreigner’ and encouragement for all things Irish.⁶¹ In conjunction with such works, newspapers and articles from *An Claidheamh Soluis* was also recited at these branches concerning various questions in relation to the League, but also on topics of a national political interest such as that relating to the passage of the Land Bill in 1903.⁶² In an attempt to instil a greater consciousness of the historical past, lectures were also occasionally given, where young members were informed on historical incidents from Cuchulainn, Sarsfield and the Siege of Limerick to O’Connell.⁶³ Most of these lectures were informed by recent

⁵⁷ CC, 23 February 1907

⁵⁸ *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 9 September 1899.

⁵⁹ *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 14 October 1899.

⁶⁰ *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 21 October 1899.

⁶¹ Eugue O’Growney, *Simple Lessons in Irish: Giving the pronunciation of each word Part V* (Dublin, 1901) pp 23, 53; *CJ*, 19, February, 28 November 1903. *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 3 April 1899.

⁶² *CJ*, 21 February 1901, 10 September 1903.

⁶³ CC, 30 May 1903; *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 30 September, 21 October 1899.

historical text, such as Mitchell's *History of Ireland*, but many by mass produced Gaelic League literature such as Lady Gregory and Miss Hall.⁶⁴ These type of political ideas were also instilled in the branches' through the teaching of songs, some of which were Irish, such as the *Spalpeen Fánach* and *Paisdin Fionn*, while others, according to an enthusiastic commentator, were 'Irish in everything but name'.⁶⁵ Such songs, it was reported, were read aloud by pupils in most branches a few times before they were sung, allowing the political ideas in such tracts to be easily digested and absorbed.⁶⁶ The authorities were perhaps conscious of the capacity of such songs to encourage popular sentiment and alarmingly reported that at branches of the Gaelic League in Clare, in 1902, 'the children are taught as their first lesson the Wearing of the Green in Gaelic'.⁶⁷ These branches, which concluded with members performing jigs and dancing to Irish airs, allowed the free and easy mixing of ideas in an entertaining environment.⁶⁸

Outside the work of the Gaelic League branches, school teachers were actively encouraged to teach Irish by organisers who frequently published the proceedings and activities of most schools in the local press.⁶⁹ Despite their differing political outlooks, both correspondents in the *Clare Journal* and the proprietor of the *Clare Champion* encouraged teachers who taught the Irish language in schools. In the columns of the *Clare Champion*, teachers in schools such as Crusheen, North Clare, were praised for 'evidently doing all they can to prevent the children' from 'growing up little Johnny Bulls'.⁷⁰ Since many national school teachers were also members of the Gaelic League, many complied with the terms of local branches which requested them to devote time to the teaching of the language in schools.⁷¹ In some instances, this extended to the carrying out and teaching of other activities associated with the League. In Rineen, near Miltown Malbay, two teachers, Thomas Foran and Mr Malone, were asked to teach Irish history alongside the Irish language, and 'learn the old songs such as those held by Michael Coimínis, who lived a mile and a half away'.⁷² The effects of the League on

⁶⁴ CC, 14 November 1908; CJ, 29 January 1903.

⁶⁵ CJ, 24 December 1900, 19 February, 28 November 1903.

⁶⁶ CJ, 24 December 1900, 19 February 1903.

⁶⁷ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 10 February 1902, 26355/S.

⁶⁸ CJ, 28 November 1903.

⁶⁹ CC, 7 February, 26 June 1903, 2 March, 27 April, 25 May 1907; LL, 17 May 1900.

⁷⁰ CC, 10 October 1903, 29 February 1908.

⁷¹ CC, 7 May, 14, 28 November 1903.

⁷² CC, 14 November 1903.

the character of the national school system was still minimal in Clare by 1902 (when the language was taught to only a few pupils as an extra subject). However, it was apparent that a greater attention was given to the teaching of Irish songs and histories.⁷³ Encouraged by the Gaelic League, national school teachers used works such as Joyce's *History of Ireland*, which featured an account of Ireland's history from Saint Patrick to Daniel O'Connell. Specific reference in this literature were given to periods of unrest and upheaval, including the Rebellion of Silken Thomas, 1641, The Battle of Aughrim, the Siege of Limerick, the Whiteboy outbreak and the United Irishmen, as well as unsavoury accounts of British misrule such as the Elizabethan plantations and Oliver Cromwell.⁷⁴ All of this material sought to mould an ever increasing national political opinion. In pursuit of the same end, Irish dances and current political and nationalist songs were revived and taught to the younger generation in schools. These songs which 'monopolised the curriculum in post independent Ireland' created 'a situation where music education served nationalist ends exclusively'.⁷⁵ In Liscannor, it was reported that, young schoolchildren were taught to sing in Irish the words of the songs 'In Memory of the Dead', 'A Nation Once Again' and 'Fontenoy' under the tutelage of Gaelic Leaguer and parish priest Fr. Moran and their teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Russell.⁷⁶ The effects of the Gaelic League on the teaching system were evident by 1908 when it was reported that Irish was taught in 'most schools' throughout the county, particularly in west Clare and north Clare where Irish was reputedly 'taught to all the children in school'.⁷⁷ The political ideas shared by many young teacher activists influenced the school curriculums increasingly nationalist ethos. This was enforced by the overlap between IRB and Gaelic League activity in certain cases. Local memory in the 1930s recounts the influence of one ardent Leaguer and IRB man John Mackey of Ennis National School who 'took a special interest in teaching and singing and also in Irish history'.⁷⁸

Encouraged by these ideas, school children performed nationalist political songs at Gaelic League concerts throughout the county. At Gaelic League concerts in the west of

⁷³ *CJ*, 1 May, 19 June, 21 August 1902.

⁷⁴ P.W. Joyce, *A Child's History of Ireland* (Dublin, 1897).

⁷⁵ Marie McCarthy, *Passing it on: The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture* (Cork, 1999) p. 183.

⁷⁶ *United Irishman*, 8 April 1905.

⁷⁷ *CC*, 25 May 1907, 30 January 1908; CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 10 February 1902, 26355/S.

⁷⁸ Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Inis (B), Drumcliffe, P O Fionnmhachain, p. 245.

the county young boys and girls performed Thomas Davis's, 'The West's awake' 'She's a Rich and Rare Land', Thomas Moore's 'Let Erin Remember', 'The Last glimpse of Erin' and popular songs of the '98 centenary including, 'The Croppy Boy' and 'The Boys of Wexford'.⁷⁹ The use of songbooks, such the *Irish Minstrel* was encouraged in League branches and these included some very nationalistic songs written in Irish and English, such as Ellen O'Leary's (Fenian John O'Leary's wife) 'The dead who died for Ireland'.⁸⁰ At a Gaelic League concert in Corbally [Kilkee] both school boys and girls, 'of from four to eight years of age, and their dancing of Irish jigs, four hand reel, and the Humours of Bandon, called forth merited bursts of applause'.⁸¹ National School teachers recited the 'The Felons of Our Land' while the young students and members sung songs such as 'The Croppy Boy', 'When shall the day break in Erin' and concluded with the popular anthem 'Ár náisiún féin arís'.⁸² In Kilbaha students sang the 1798 song 'An tSean Bhean Bocht' and a popular nationalist broadside tune, 'Eire go Brath'.⁸³ These songs, whether lively or nostalgic, had the capacity to encourage the dissemination of popular nationalist sentiment. Now taught in the school classroom and in branches of the League, to a young (and only recently) literate audience, such songs served to enforce feelings of commonality and allowed the assertion of a national identity. These songs not only stirred imagination and evoked emotions but served to dictate popular memory. Nationalist teachers and activists did not simply instruct children how to recite or sing the words to these songs – they often informed students, in nationalist terms, of the political context in which these songs were written. Speaking of the students rendering of 'Labhair Béarla agus bí glanta' in Kilbaha, the *Clare Champion* introduced the song as a 'reminiscence of the days when our national language was under a ban'.⁸⁴

The evolution of the Gaelic League coincided with a flowering of drama both locally and nationally. Both old and recent plays were staged throughout the county in the first decade of the twentieth century. These plays were primarily participated in by young school boys and girls, with large attendances from the communities in which they were

⁷⁹ CC, 11 June 1898, 4, 16, 30 March, 2 November 1907; 11, 25, January, 14 March 1908.

⁸⁰ CC, 2 March 1907

⁸¹ CC, 16 March 1907.

⁸² CC, 16 March 1907.

⁸³ CC, 30 March 1907.

⁸⁴ CC, 30 March 1907.

staged. The recurring theme in these plays was a focus on the past, and, just as in the songs, popular insurrections and periods of nationalist upheaval were commemorated and celebrated through their performance.

In Lisdoonvarna in 1907, both young and old participated in the drama, 'Rory O'More'. The play was most likely taken from the novel of the same name, published in 1834 and almost immediately adapted for the stage.⁸⁵ According to the *Clare Champion*, the play was set in 1798 when

Ireland at that time (as alas!) she has often been since, groaning under coercion and martial law. The people were anxiously expecting aid from France, and a young Irish officer named De Lacy, who came over amongst others, to help organise a rebellion finds shelter in Mrs O'More's humble cottage. He and Rory have many amusing encounters and hair breath escapes, but all ends happily for them though the two ruffians in the plot meet their just retribution at their hands.⁸⁶

Both young and old were similarly informed on popular events and political figures of the era in Miltown Malbay, in the same year, through the staging of the play 'Robert Emmet', which succeeded in encouraging an admiration for this rebellious political figure amongst the audience who attended.⁸⁷ In an effort to provoke sympathy for those who engaged in similar acts of defiance, the play 'Captain Jack the Irish Outlaw' - set during the Fenian rising - gained popularity in Kilrush in 1902. Besides chronicling the adventures of the Captain Jack Driscoll in 1867, the most interesting piece (from a nationalist point of view) was the changing sympathies of a British soldier who when sent to Ireland to 'hunt rebels' soon befriends the 'rebel leader' and marries his sister Aline, concluding with the lines; 'I came here to hunt rebels, but all I did was marry Aline astore'.⁸⁸ In Miltown Malbay, Clonadrum N.S. boys and girls performed 'Innisfail – A Tale of 67'. The play showed similar sympathies in its treatment of the main character, the determined but unsuccessful Fenian, Felix O'Flaherty. While the insurrection failed, the play ended on an optimistic note - the Fenians who promised their return to 'Irish soil again' to 'make the grand old hills re echo with the music of Innisfail' – much to the delight of the large audience present.⁸⁹ Crowds reputedly

⁸⁵ Norman Vance, *Irish Literature Since 1800* (London, 2002) p. 81

⁸⁶ *CC*, 13 April 1907.

⁸⁷ *CC*, 26 January 1907.

⁸⁸ Bernard Francis Moore, *Captain Jack or The Irish Outlaw* (Boston, 1894); *LL*, 10 February 1902.

⁸⁹ Richard Quinn, *Innisfail* (Boston, 1890) p. 53.

simultaneously wept and applauded at these performances, which evoked the sympathies of the rural and small town audience.⁹⁰ During the staging of ‘Innishfail’ attendants gave ‘thunders of applause at every stage of the performance’.⁹¹ Following the staging of the play ‘Robert Emmet’ in Lisdoonvarna a local correspondent to the *Clare Journal* commented that:

His [Robert Emmet’s] desperate undertaking, the story of his failure, and sacrifice of his life, are all matters of household history, and were portrayed with such realistic vividness that one could have scarcely believed he was not an actual witness of the tragedies enacted in that memorable period.⁹²

Other plays provoked the same type of popular feelings that were roused by the land agitation. Both the *Resurrection of Dinny O’Dowd* and *An Gioblachán* were plays which featured decidedly partisan versions of the tenant farmer-landlord relationship. The local paper warned attendants of the play *An Gioblachán* ‘to expect clenched hands and resolute looking faces as the deeds of the tyrannical landlord are related’.⁹³ Like the productions of the Gaelic League, these plays had a political objective, encouraging support for ‘Irish Ireland’ and provoking hostility towards – as one policeman expressed it – ‘everything English’.⁹⁴ The bi-lingual play *An t-Athruhadh Mór* staged by the Gaelic League in Ennis in 1907, encouraged the attendants not be ashamed to learn their own language. The play chronicled the return of an Irish-American whose

Ten years stay in America has made him intensely Irish. He is surprised to find that the language is so dead in his native parish. He is disgusted to learn that his brother Sean who was a most humorous and highly effective study, though a good Irish speaker, refused to speak Irish. He makes a bet with Mairin an anti-Irish friend of his, that he will make Sean speak Irish. By disguising himself as a cattle dealer, and getting his two friends, Tadgh and Concubar to disguise themselves as policemen, he effects his purpose.⁹⁵

As well as performing plays which were published by the Gaelic League and were inspired by the literary revival, local compositions were also performed. Young school boys and girls in Scariff, East Clare, performed plays which encouraged the teaching of the Irish Language and promotion of Irish industries – all which highlighted the

⁹⁰ *CJ*, 5 January 1888.

⁹¹ *CC*, 4 April 1908.

⁹² *CJ*, 5 January 1888.

⁹³ *CJ*, 10 September 1903, 25 January 1908.

⁹⁴ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 10 February 1902, 26355/S.

⁹⁵ *CC*, 20 July 1907.

capacity of such Gaelic League propaganda to influence the ideas and opinions of the young at a very early age.⁹⁶

The political outcome of this cultural activity is difficult to quantify but nonetheless real. Unlike their predecessors, the rising generation of young men and women – who were fed on a diet of nationalist ideas both at school and at branches of the Gaelic League - showed little concern with constitutional politics. Although they showed consciousness of the aims and policies of these organisations, many were not too keen to become involved in them, leading members of the United Irish League to complain that ‘there was a great apathy among the people’.⁹⁷ This was probably because young people did not feel the need to join the constitutional movement: many of their families had sustained sufficient comfort from the benefits accrued during the passing of the various Land Acts, particularly that of 1903.

This was openly hinted more than once on political platforms.⁹⁸ Many members of the UIL, while not overtly hostile to the aims of the Gaelic League, felt that it was diverting the interest of many of their younger adherents. According to a rank and file member of the UIL, ‘some critics were fond of stating that the young men were not interested in the movement’.⁹⁹ Members in general complained that the UIL organisation was not attracting enough recruits to many of its branches and accused the ‘counter organisations’ of Sinn Féin and the Gaelic League of taking away its membership.¹⁰⁰ In West Clare the organiser of the UIL was prevented from planning a demonstration in the town of Kilrush because local nationalists had warned him that there was a ‘feis in Ennis on Sunday, and you must not interfere with it’.¹⁰¹ In response, he complained that ‘Mr. [William] O’Brien and the Sinn Féiners and all the other counter organisations in

⁹⁶ *CJ*, 6 February 1902.

⁹⁷ *CC*, 13 July, 24 August 7 September, 28 December 1907.

⁹⁸ M.P. Lillis local speaker at a meeting in Kilmihil stated that he ‘met a man in the parish some time ago who asked him what was the good of politics or anything like that and this very man had his land less than a third of its original rent, now only for this movement he might not be here at all, more than likely he would not’, *CC*, 4 May, 21 September 1907.

⁹⁹ *CC*, 7 September 1907.

¹⁰⁰ *CC*, 13, 27 July, 3, 24, August 1907.

¹⁰¹ *CC*, 13 July 1907.

the country are turning their back on the party. Nothing will do the young fellows now, but singing and dancing and the rest of it'.¹⁰²

His accusations provoked a response amongst members of the Gaelic League. In a letter to the press, one language activist complained that the 'Gaelic League is not entirely to blame. The continual occurrence of dissension in the ranks of the Irish party and the intriguing which undermined the party of politics did its own share of fatal work'.¹⁰³ However he did acknowledge that 'very few would question the veracity of the statement...that the Gaelic League movement has distracted the attention of the youth of the country from the parliamentary movement and weakened the national organisation at home'.¹⁰⁴

There were probably many reasons why these 'younger fellows' preferred the Gaelic League to the parliamentary movement. Most of the UIL were older men, inheriting and married farmers and so were probably a world apart from the minds of the younger generation. Towards the 1900s attempts were made by local branches to make the Gaelic League more sociable and entertaining. The *Clare Champion*, whose columns were responsible for much of the mobilisation of the Gaelic League in Clare, encouraged the 'social part of the Gaelic League programme' and was acutely conscious that a 'multitude' would 'take to that study if it were made interesting'.¹⁰⁵ Whether the newspapers influenced the campaign or not, branches became scenes where dancing and festivities took place, were socially inclusive and not limited to any age or gender, consequently attracting many young women and young men, whose social outlets heretofore had almost solely consisted of card-playing and gambling.¹⁰⁶ The Gaelic League appealed to the youth in a variety of ways, not simply through the exciting nature of the pursuits it engaged in, but in particular through its literature. In this sense it corresponded with other popular, 'coming of age literature' which appealed to a younger audience: portraying 'young idealistic young heroes' struggling 'against a

¹⁰² CC, 13 July 1907.

¹⁰³ CC, 24 August 1907.

¹⁰⁴ CC, 24 August 1907.

¹⁰⁵ CC, 18 July 1903; *Conradh na Gaelige: Annual Report of the Gaelic League, 1901-1902, and proceedings of Ard-fheis* (Dublin, 1902), p. 51.

¹⁰⁶ CC, 26 June 1903.

conventional, selfish and myopic older generation'.¹⁰⁷ This was emphasised in modern day novels written by Gaelic League enthusiasts such as the *Graves of Kilnamorna*, which placed an emphasis on the need to shake off the lethargy of current political movements, and inspire young men into newer, perhaps even radical, acts of 'patriotism'.¹⁰⁸

Lethargy with the 'old regime', which had shaped Irish politics after Parnell, was evident in Clare where the success of new movements such as Gaelic League was partly attributed to the differing political outlooks of the young.¹⁰⁹ It was apparent that in some instances, when it came to politics, the younger began to disagree with the older generation's political views. For those younger men who did join the UIL branches there were instances of disagreements over policy in some areas, particularly in relation to land disputes. Tensions escalated in O'Callaghan's between the 'older generation' and the 'younger generation' who favoured the carrying out of a more 'active policy' (i.e. agrarian outrage) in their area.¹¹⁰ Many of the young men became 'quite demonstrative' when the older men present refused to endorse their policy. There was an obvious disgruntlement with the policies of the older generation.¹¹¹ In secret society ranks it was reported that 'the older Fenians were becoming more subdued, fighting shy of the theories of the younger enthusiasts'.¹¹² While such tensions were to be expected between young and old, between the conservative and the radical, it was apparent that more and more young people showed a growing disillusionment with (or at the very least a lack of interest) in parliamentary activity, and were increasingly swelling the ranks of vibrant new groups like the Gaelic League. Their involvement had a significant impact on the type of political opinions that were to emerge in subsequent decades.

These political developments were a powerful factor in shaping future nationalist thought. Movements such as the Gaelic League, as Garvin put it, were a 'forcing school for future nationalist leaders and activists and produced a group of young people who were at the very centre of advanced nationalist organisations during the

¹⁰⁷ Deirdre McMahon, *The Moynihan Brothers in Peace and War 1908-1918* (Dublin, 2004) p. xxiv.

¹⁰⁸ Patrick Augustine Sheehan, *The Graves at Kilmorna: A Tale of '67* (London, 2009) pp 210, 220.

¹⁰⁹ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999) p. 13.

¹¹⁰ CC, 28 December 1907.

¹¹¹ CC, 28 December 1907.

¹¹² CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 1 May 1901, 24554/S.

following twenty years'.¹¹³ Generally speaking the League was a non-political organisation, 'but occasionally' (more often than not, as was the case of Clare) it had the capacity to 'drift into mere disloyal gatherings, where Irish history is taught, and everything antagonistic to England inculcated'.¹¹⁴ Judging from police reports, it appears that the main factor which aggravated Dublin Castle in relation to IRB involvement in the Gaelic League was its effect on the youth – who predominately joined clubs or were taught in school by teachers who were members of the Gaelic League. At this time, attendance at school was becoming mandatory and those who failed to send their children to school were prosecuted in court.¹¹⁵ However, these attempts to enforce stricter school attendance now meant that young school children were now more susceptible to the type of political ideas that were taught in some of them. In Clare the police reported alarmingly that

The Irish language is taught in most schools and there are numerous clubs throughout the country. The ostensible object of the League is to encourage the study of Irish language, but the real object of the League is to foster a hatred of the England and everything English in the rising generation'.¹¹⁶

Law enforcers regarded the Gaelic League as a breeding ground for young enthusiasts whose purpose was to disseminate Irish national aspirations and to fill the minds of young people with sentiments antagonistic to English rule. The Gaelic League was making 'strong progress' in the county (it was reported that Clare 'subscribed more money to the language fund than any other county') and was 'becoming in many places a mere school for teaching Fenianism and a hatred of the British government'.¹¹⁷ While the League's influence on the young was difficult to gauge, it was predicted that its influence would be apparent in time. According to the constabulary these branches were 'purely sentimental at present and directed towards the formation of a strong nationalist feeling amongst the youth of the country', but could develop 'into active work'.¹¹⁸ Perhaps one policeman was not too far off when he predicted that,

It is very probable that this League will be productive of evil in the future as in many instances the opportunity is taken to educate the children in Irish

¹¹³ Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, p. 102

¹¹⁴ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 23 July 1901, 25049/S.

¹¹⁵ CC, 13 April, 25 May 1907.

¹¹⁶ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 10 February 1902, 26355/S.

¹¹⁷ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, November 1901; CC, 20 April 1907.

¹¹⁸ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 23 April 1901, 24517/S.

literature hostile to England and to teach them rebel songs, etc, and to imbue them with a hatred of all things English. In other counties under review the League is making no progress.¹¹⁹

It was apparent that the developments which occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, proved to be the cornerstone of the type of nationalism that would emerge in the next few decades.¹²⁰ Stimulated by a variety of factors which have been examined in this chapter particularly the Boer War and a growing rapport with Irish-Americans abroad (who contributed to enforcing ideas on race and racial separateness at this time) - radical nationalist political ideas emerged which increasingly challenged, and fostered ideas that ran counter to, the state. The culmination of these ideas were particularly felt within the Gaelic League, which helped set the tone for the type of political ideas that were common in the following two decades. The League's ultimate success lay in its impact on the young, through which it influenced the actions of many of the rising generation of young men and women in the revolutionary years of the twentieth century.

¹¹⁹ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 17 February 1902, 26398/S.

¹²⁰ Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Denis Patrick Moran and the Irish Colonial Tradition, 1891-1921', in D. G. Boyce, David Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan, *Political Thought in Ireland Since the Seventeenth Century*, (New York, 1993) p. 154.

Conclusion

The development of radical nationalist ideas in Clare was a complex process, and one which this study suggests occurred far earlier than represented by Fitzpatrick in his seminal work on the county in the revolutionary period. It was spurred by a combination of economic and political forces, beginning in the 1860s and peaking in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

The economic basis for Clare's politicisation cannot be dismissed. Economic distress catapulted the local population into political involvement in the late nineteenth century. Faced with agricultural crisis in 1879, the farmer began to realise that politics and laws affected him. Large numbers turned out at the polls, congregating on street corners and public thoroughfares in every part of the county. Crowds were showing a greater consciousness of the law and the need to exert their own political opinions. Mobilised by the Land League, the farming class began to assert its demands for land reform. Farmers adopted various forms of tenant resistance to voice their grievances. Through various forms of tenant combination, farmers increasingly asserted their demands for peasant proprietorship. Tenant protest assumed many forms. Many protests drew from previous forms of collective agrarian resistance, such as that of the Whiteboy and Ribbon movement, through 'moonlighting'. Other forms of collective protest, such as resistance to evictions and cattle driving, were highly organised and ranged from the peaceful and constitutional to the violent, but by 1909 it was apparent that farmers (who were benefitting from the land acts) were becoming more in tune with the government, and increasingly turning to Westminster to see what deal best suited them. They had become astute and effective organisers and had become increasingly politically conscious. However, while economic issues influenced the development of political attitudes in Clare, it was clear that politics was not just shaped by the pocket. The political ideas which emerged in this period were for the most part, a product of modernisation that witnessed the rising development of political ideas and a growing political consciousness at grass roots level. Politics was no longer shaped by the pocket; it became a definable political ideology.

The popularisation of politics was to a great extent due to rising modernising trends, mostly importantly transformations in transport and infrastructure in a region that had formerly been isolated and introverted. Echoing Weber's work on provincial France, this study suggests that factors of 'modernisation', including improved methods of transport and communication, along with rising prosperity and literacy, together fostered a growing susceptibility to nationalist attitudes.¹

The importance of infrastructural development is paramount. This was particularly evident in the west and north-west of county Clare. Once inward looking and remote, these regions' growing modernisation meant that the inhabitants were more in tune with political events than ever before. The expansion of roads and rail connected remote provincial towns and villages to urban centres and brought news to both the inhabitants of these centres and those of the surrounding hinterland. People congregated on main roads in these provincial towns to hear the news coming from outside, such as at Canada Cross in Miltown Malbay, named after the site where crowds congregated in 1866 to hear news of the attempted Fenian invasion of Canada.² New roads not only brought news to these centres, but also facilitated mobility. With a better system of roads, locals became more confident about travelling, and those who went abroad now frequently returned home, bringing with them news and political ideas from abroad, but mostly from America. Tourism also developed in these regions, facilitated in part by the development of rail, which from the 1880s onwards opened up scenic resorts such as Lisdoonvarna, Doolin and Lahinch to the outside world. This modernisation brought changes to these local communities. Once afraid of or hostile to the outsider, locals now began to doctor old folk stories for the benefit of the tourist. Facilitated by such changes, it was evident that the habits and cultures of the rural community were changing. Rising prosperity coincided with improved standards of housing, habits and standards of living, which meant that the farmer was beginning to link his concerns with broader political views. It was evident that with these transformations in communication and with increased prosperity, the local population now increasingly looked outside the community for political ideas.

¹ Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870-1914*

² MacMathuna, *Kilfarboy*, p. 119.

The process by which these political ideas developed and became a concrete ideology expressed by the population was accelerated by rising literacy and the implementation of legislation such as the Education Act of 1831. It was apparent that education was increasingly availed of from the 1860s onwards, and while more work needs to be completed on the nationalist elements in an education system that was ostensibly politically impartial, it was evident that schools in Clare were becoming increasingly nationalist in character by the late nineteenth century. Schools were penetrated by the political debate then ongoing around them, and it was evident that during the land agitation the classroom was exposed to the agrarian issue, as teachers and school children became caught up in boycotting. Perhaps the most significant element influencing the increasingly nationalist character of the school system, however, was the Gaelic League, which encouraged the teaching of Irish history and song in conjunction with the language, and which attempted to indoctrinate pupils with a strong nationalist sentiment. Rising standards of education and the decline of the Irish language correlated with an increasing literacy in the urban, but more particularly, in the traditionally Irish speaking rural areas. Testing in the Clare context the ideas of Ó Ciosáin, Legg, and McMahon, an examination of the varieties of newspapers and books circulated and read in the county, reveals how this literature succeeded in mobilising political thought.³ The growing availability of nationalist newspapers in the 1870s meant that an increasingly literate audience could be targeted by those intent on spreading nationalist ideas. While it is difficult to gauge the exact level of newspaper consumption in the countryside, analysis has shown that newspapers did spread around, circulated in shops and public houses, and on artisan's premises. Newspapers were even, according to local lore, disseminated throughout the countryside by a travelling cart, providing news and information to inhabitants who were outside the network of provincial towns.⁴ The newspaper was shared and read among groups of people and was a highly prized commodity, judging from the careful manner of circulation and distribution. Through an analysis of the correspondence to the editor and the texts of speeches made at public meetings and reproduced in the local press, the present study

³ Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*; O'Ciosain, *Print and Popular Culture*; Deirdre McMahon, *The Moynihan Brothers in Peace and War*.

⁴ Irish Folklore Commission, Schools Collection, Scariff (c), Tuaim Greine, Mairead Bean MacEoin, p. 68.

suggests that such newspapers, in conjunction with an ever growing circulation of cheaply produced nationalist literary tracts, had a profound influence upon the political opinions of the population. This literature came in turn to influence the type of rhetoric which was increasingly used by the population, sometimes even unconsciously, as was clear in the police report of an RIC man, who, referring to the state of poverty in south-west Clare in 1902, commented that ‘if my countrymen would only look forward instead of backwards so much they would have advanced another step on the road to being a contented and prosperous nation’.⁵

But modernisation involved not just the ideas and attitudes stimulated by developing transport and education. Individuals, especially catholic priests and members of the Royal Irish Constabulary were important modernisers in the local community, bringing the locality into closer contact with the central authority of either church or state. But what role did these figures of authority in the day-day-life of the community play in the spread of political ideas at popular level? Were their opinions simply the product of their individual backgrounds, or were they shaped by public pressures? Through an examination of the community’s main authority figures, the policeman and the cleric, this study has thrown light on a greater degree of police and clerical political disaffection than recognised by research to date. It has highlighted that while the loyalties of the clergy and the police were for the most part to the state and the hierarchy, there were times when they supported subversive or popular political movements from Fenianism to the Land League. Testing Hoppen’s ideas on clerical support for nationalism and examining the factors which influenced police and clerical political sympathies, this study concludes that the clergy’s and the RIC’s support for agrarian and political causes was influenced by their backgrounds.⁶ These politically active figures of authority tended to come from farming families, or were natives of the county in which they administered, and therefore found it impossible to disengage themselves from local political concerns and issues. Whether really sympathetic or not, many felt it necessary to side with the local population’s political opinions, simply in the interests of economic necessity. Material concerns, such as church-building and decorating, combined with the clergy’s economic dependence on the laity, influenced

⁵ CO904/76, Reel 41, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, December 1902.

⁶ Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society*, p. 182.

many priests' attitudes to popular politics. It was apparent that when they did not side with the local population on political issues, they suffered the economic consequences. This was particularly evident during the Parnellite split in Clare, when the clergy's support for the unpopular anti-Parnellite side resulted in a great number of parishioners throughout the county withholding their Easter dues.⁷ The RIC's support for nationalist causes, while less apparent than that of the clergy, was similarly motivated by economic grievances, though in their case more in relation to resentment over issues including poor pay, insufficient barrack accommodation and pensions. In addition to the economic factors which motivated their political involvement, many priests and some police seem to have supported popular political causes out of a real fear of incurring the displeasure of the local community. Animosity was voiced by the local community towards such authority figures who did not join or support popular movements, a number of whom were denounced locally, some even becoming the butt of agrarian violence. Police who were at odds with the local population during the land agitation became the target of violence, and some resigned or left the area through fear. Members of the clergy also, through fear of reprisal from the local population, joined or backed political movements. The problems encountered by noncompliant clergy and the political conflict in which they engaged with the local population, highlights the fragility of church authority at the height of the 'devotional revolution' – which has historically portrayed the church as being at the height of its political power.⁸ This was far from true in the case of Clare. Both the clergy and the RIC's stance on political issues in the local community, motivated either through fear or economic dependency, reveals as much about the political attitudes of the local population as about the authority figures themselves. A local study of the attitudes of both police and clergy, then, and their interaction with the local population throughout the late nineteenth century, is in fact a mirror through which to gauge the changing political attitudes of the local community in which they operated.

The role of sociability and leisure in the transmission and spreading of these political ideas cannot be underestimated. This comes across most clearly in the context of the public house. Its proprietor played a large part in facilitating the political debate and in

⁷ CO903/3, p. 17; *Daily Independent*, 4 April 1893; CO904/62, Reel 29, 'RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports', December 1902.

⁸ Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875'

some instances even initiating it, either through his personal association with the Land League or IRB, or his provision of a premises where political discussions took place and political plans were made. The setting of the public house was essential in facilitating the transmission of nationalist sentiment, providing an intimate and friendly atmosphere where alcohol was consumed and political ideas were formed and spread. Social clubs and associations also played their part: with more time and affluence available for recreational pursuits, these provided a leisure milieu that encouraged the contagion of political ideas from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and reflected the increasingly radical nature of popular opinion by the closing years of the century. The activities in which individuals engaged in public houses, clubs and societies, all shaped and reflected popular nationalism: nationalist songs were sung, groups engaged in political discussions on land and other political questions, and various political groups such as the IRB mixed with the clientele or membership and sought to propagate their political views and to recruit members through conviviality.

Outside the closed arena of pub and club, the 'burlesque' nature of crowd activity in political demonstrations from the 1860s onwards, transmitted radical ideas to a wider and more inclusive audience.⁹ Public demonstrations spread political ideas by crossing the gender divide and attracting the attendance of both male and female. Staged with an ever increasing frequency in the 1880s, such events also increasingly linked the urban and rural by attracting large crowds from both countryside and town. Thus, and through their carnival-like nature, demonstrations had a major effect in promoting nationalist sentiment through display and recreation. An analysis of the demonstrations held to mark the anniversary of the 1798 rebellion shows the spin-off these events had in the socio-political life of the community, spanning reading rooms, the staging of dramas and lectures through which to indoctrinate the population with re-hashed versions of Ireland's insurrectionary past, which emphasised both its Catholic and separatist elements. Like the public house and the social club, these demonstrations and the events which accompanied them created and then enforced a commonality of political feeling through pastime.

⁹ Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society*; Claire Murphy, 'Varieties of Crowd Activity' pp 173-189.

The IRB was one of the most effective modernisers and facilitators of politicisation. Its objective of an Irish republic (no matter how ill-considered) brought a consciousness of wider issues to the local stage. If anything, an assessment of IRB activism in local politics has revealed that the IRB was far more important in spreading political ideas than heretofore acknowledged. The brotherhood had an extensive network in County Clare, highly organised and with close links between local members and those outside – both in Ireland and abroad in England and America. The links with the outside were evident in intense competition within the county between the IRB and the INA (a dispute with its origins in the Clan na nGael in America), and the fact that the split was evident in rural parts of both east and west Clare indicates that IRB involvement was not an exclusively urban phenomenon.¹⁰ The hostile reception shown to the new INA movement and towards its organisers also suggests how deeply rooted the original IRB movement was in the county, something strengthened by the presence there of individuals with personal links to the '67 Fenian organisation. Though numerically few, their influence in this period was much greater than their numbers suggest. They and the brotherhood acted as a catalyst for radicalisation, their IRB membership overlapping with membership of cultural organisations and political organisations such as the GAA, Young Ireland Society, Land League and Gaelic League has revealed that the radical nationalist element was strong in the county and within nationalism at this time. Perhaps the IRB's most significant role in mobilising opinion was through its reconstruction of popular memory through its propagation of myths of the separatist past – stories which served to legitimate violent resistance and encourage a strong hostility towards the existing state, and creating what was in effect a new popular identity.

This creation of particularly emotive and often militant versions of the past, as propagated by the IRB, was essential to the proliferation of popular nationalism. Incidents and events from the recent past including the Irish Confederation and the Great Famine of the 1840s, and from the more remote past – like the Battle of Mullaghmast in the 1500s and the Siege of Limerick in 1690 – were frequently recalled in the speeches of these activists to legitimise their views on the present. These speeches were particularly emotive and displayed a strong resentment towards the

¹⁰ McGee, *The IRB*; Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*; Matthew Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*

existing state, such as those recited within the Irish National Foresters, which spoke of Cromwell's 'butchery' in Drogheda and

how upwards of 1000 people sought refuge in St Peters Church, and were slaughtered every one, men women and children til the streets ran red with blood, and how the priests were dragged from beneath the altar and slaughtered like oxen. And then a dispatch was sent to parliament thanking God for the butchery he had made. From that day barbarism had its reign over the land.¹¹

These popular versions of the past were shaped by the literature read by political activists. This literature, which ranged from popular histories of figures like John Mitchel, Thomas Francis Meagher and Wolfe Tone to song books including *Spirit of the Nation* and *O'Donnell Abu*, served to radicalise nationalist views in the late nineteenth century. These popular nationalist views of the past were shaped as much by the visual as by the printed word, i.e. by cheap popular prints as well as by historical and patriotic literature. An analysis of such prints, ranging from portraits of Sarsfield, Emmett and Wolfe Tone, to prints of battles like Fontenoy and Vinegar Hill, and a study of the conspicuous way they were displayed over mantle pieces, on window panes, in clubs and public areas, shows how all such versions of the past were integral to shaping political ideas and viewpoints.

But modernisation was not just shaped by collective ideas of the past as propagated by the IRB. Modernisation also facilitated changes which had a direct affect on the type of political mobilisation which was to occur in the late nineteenth century. Clare had a unique pattern of political activity that was shaped by the changing shape of the farm. Changes to the nature of the farm, and changing inheritance patterns, brought about a greater desire on the part of young men to dictate their own futures politically. Both inheritors – and more importantly, non-inheritors – were often disposed to find political outlets for their discontent. Farmers' sons were amongst those involved in perpetrating the agrarian violence of the land war and later the 'ranch war'. Even if individuals joined these movements with a material end in view, i.e. peasant proprietorship, their motivation went beyond the purely practical. They seem to have used political

¹¹ *CI*, 21 February 1885.

involvement to challenge the conservatism of their parents through politics, joining new groups such as the IRB that gave them a new and assertive sense of national identity.

Some individuals within the family were important modernisers, and encouraged the spread of radical political ideas. Shaped by memories of the past, and the treatment of her sons through imprisonment, Brigit Clune was typical of the generation of women who sought to imbue their sons with new political views. These women were pivotal in the evolution of radical nationalism in the county: while younger women became involved in Fenian demonstrations and elections from the 1860s onwards, women in the home seem to have influenced the political decisions of their husbands and – probably more importantly – those of their sons. In Clare, the political influence of women (briefly touched upon by Garvin) was vital in transmitting nationalist ideas through the passing on of memory, real or invented.¹² Political activists in the post-independence period frequently indicated that their nationalist ideas were reinforced by their mothers in the 1880s and 1890s.¹³

It was apparent that nationalist politics had become widely relevant as the century progressed, and a series of events and incidents acted as building blocks to transform a vague sense of political identity into a powerful popular nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century. With the Fenian movement in the 1860s, politics came to be shaped by a growing resistance to the authority of the state through the fostering of local communities' support for political prisoners. A decade later, his resistance was further strengthened by the actions of the Land League, when local populations collectively took the law into their own hands, this time in the more immediate matter of access to land. Thereafter, popular attention became increasingly focussed on issues of identity defined by language and nationality through the establishment and operation of organisations such as the Gaelic League and '98 Centenary Association. While issues concerning land were still vital to the shaping of popular opinion, it was apparent that by the 1900s these radical nationalist ideas had become crystallised. This was nowhere more evident than at the unveiling of the Manchester Martyr Monument in Kilrush in 1903, where Fr. Clancy's speech highlighted that radical nationalist views were no longer the ideas of those who were classified as 'extreme'

¹² Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries*

¹³ CBS, PIRSS, Carton 3, 6 February 1901, 24032/S.

I maintain that the memory of Allen Larkin and O'Brien, as of Emmet, Wolfe Tone, John Mitchell, or Charles Kickham (applause) is the heritage of every man who has a heart to feel, or a mind to plan, or an arm to strike for Ireland (applause).¹⁴

The evolution of this radical nationalist consciousness in the fifty years after 1860 had a decided impact on the ideas of the post-1916 generation. In coming to this conclusion, the present study challenges Fitzpatrick who, through his emphasis upon the importance of the constitutional (Home Rule) tradition in influencing political activism within later Sinn Féin, underplayed the significance of radical nationalist tradition in shaping the political outlooks of those who emerged after 1916.¹⁵ His work, like others has obscured the extent to which any other tradition existed outside of constitutionalism. In fact Fitzpatrick quite clearly states that 'in provincial Ireland there was only one school that mattered – the Home Rule movement'.¹⁶

Other more recent works have revealed the influence of this radical culture on the politics of the later republican period, and in doing so, have questioned Fitzpatrick's assertion that the Sinn Féin movement was built on the Home Rule tradition. Campbell's work on Galway has brought up some interesting parallels with the case of Clare and has revealed the extent to which the radical IRB-cum-agrarian element shaped ideas and events in the later republican period.¹⁷ As in the case of Galway, the later Sinn Féin movement in Clare derived much of its energy from the radical agrarian and political culture that existed in the county since at least the 1880s. Much of the present study suggests that by the early 1900s, most Home Rulers in county Clare (many of them graziers) gave only token support to the UIL – the predominant constitutional movement of the time. A radical agrarian IRB element did exist within both the UIL and Sinn Féin in the county at this time but, as this thesis argues, it was not the agrarian tradition solely but the broader forces of modernisation that influenced the political views of the following decades.

The radical nationalist ideas in the later period were also a legacy of such groups as the IRB, something which Fitzpatrick did not factor into his work. Contrary to his assertion

¹⁴ CC, 5 September 1903

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp 127-138.

¹⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 115.

¹⁷ Campbell, *Land and revolution*,

that the IRB ‘had little to teach the post-rising generation, either as politicians or fighting men’, these men had much to teach and, judging from their influence in political life, social culture and popular memory, they provided the following revolutionary generation with a tradition to follow.¹⁸ In fact in many ways, it was the IRB and their attitudes which generated the type of politics that emerged in the decades after the famine. They encouraged nationalist political ideas at ground level, sought to impart in others a greater resistance and hostility to the law, and stimulated the development of a cultural identity that was separate and distinct from the state. As well as providing a framework for the type of political ideas that would emerge in the later period, they also left behind them a tradition to emulate. There was a visible link between the IRB and the post independence period - a tradition that was often passed down through families since the 1860s.¹⁹ IRA men were involved with the IRB men in various political bodies from Sinn Féin to the ’98 centenary in the early twentieth century, while others recollected memories of being told stories connected with the ‘Fenian days’ in the Land League and the ‘Invincibles’.²⁰

This radical political ideology that manifested in the later period was as much shaped by increasing education, literacy, and a growing consciousness of a nationalist past. It was a product of a rising political ideology, some of which were evident in the home. Certain continuities are evident between the generation who emerged after 1916, and those mothers who instilled in their sons memories and stories of the past from O’Connell to the Fenians, in the 1880s and 1890s. This period was an important time in the development of nationalist memory, which was increasingly configured by events such as the ’98 centenary and imparted by political groups such as the IRB. The centenary, exploited by the IRB in Clare, asserted that they were the inheritors of a one long unbroken tradition, stretching back to periods of resistance and upheaval from 1798 and before. These memories of the insurrectionary past were popularized

¹⁸ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 137.

¹⁹ In fact there is a very consistent link between the two. In and around Kilrush, and in many other areas; it was often part of the tradition ‘to invite the eldest sons of all the old Fenians to become members of the Brotherhood’. In Ennis, Thomas Madigan was responsible for passing on the tradition in his family, while names which gained prominence in 1867, such as Shinnors in Ennis, Fennell in Carrigaholt, Slattery in Feakle and Clune near Clooney, would continue the republican tradition in the pre-independence period. IRA Witness Statements, Joseph Barrett, Brigade Operations Officer, Mid Clare Brigade BMH.WS1324

²⁰ See also, IRA Witness Statements, Andrew O’Donohue, Lickeen, Kilfenora, Co. Clare, Commandant Fifth Battalion, Mid Clare Brigade, BMH.WS.1326; Coffey, *The Parish of Inchicronan*, p. 216.

particularly after 1898, and shaped the views of subsequent generations for a long time afterwards – even as late as the 1930s. In particular, these histories of the past shaped many of the ideas shared by later republican activists. This is something which is reflected in the views of one IRA man in Ennistymon, who was conscious of a link with the revolutionary past when he told others to ‘get ready to fight the foreigner and finish the job the Fenians set out to do’.²¹ This radical nationalist tradition, contributed to the formation of later revolutionary consciousness, much more than has been previously examined.

Most importantly these views and ideas that emergence in the later period, were continuously being developed and shaped by the radical nationalist tradition, particularly through organisations such as the Gaelic League. The importance of this tradition in the Clare context, and indeed throughout most historical works, has been under-estimated and more emphasis is needed to highlight its impact upon the thoughts and ideas of the population prior to the revolutionary period. There was a visible link between the radical ideas shared by the new movement that became more manifest in the later period. It was anti-English; its presentation of the past encouraged acts of physical force; and through its assertions of cultural and linguistic difference it promulgated the view that the population was culturally separate and distinct from the state – an idea which contributed to the outlook of the later republican movement.

The Gaelic League and the ideas it instilled were quite powerful. These ideas did not just come to dominate Irish politics in Clare by some ‘strange accident’ after 1916.²² It was, in fact, extensively organised in the county by the early 1900s, and was decidedly popular amongst a wide cross-section of the population. It attracted all political categories from patriotic clergymen to IRB members, all social classes from grazier to labourer, both young and old, and both male and female. It was particularly important in even the most remote regions of the county, in the south west and the north, heretofore outside media coverage and attention, as its organisers penetrated every

²¹ IRA Witness Statements, Patrick Devitt, Cloneen, Kilnaboy, Vice O/C Fifth Battalion MidClare Brigade BMH.WS1044.

²² David Fitzpatrick, ‘Ireland Since 1870’, in R. F. Foster, *The Oxford History of Ireland* (Oxford, 1908) p. 186.

region, mobilising the local population in support of the movement – evidence for which still survives in membership lists and in the literature it distributed.

Therefore, it was because of continuity – rather than ‘historical contingency’ – that the influence of the Gaelic League grew.²³ Gaelic League branch membership in Clare in the early 1900s shows a particularly high preponderance of young men who had become disillusioned with party politics. These young men were often specifically targeted by organisers, not just in branches of the Gaelic League but in the school system from the 1900s onwards. From a young age children were taught songs and stories which featured events such as 1798 and 1867, and which glorified acts of physical force. The ground which the movement made in this period influenced the formation of later pre-revolutionary sentiment. Conscious of its capacity to instil, at an early age, radical nationalist sentiment amongst the young, one policeman believed that the League, ‘will be productive of evil in the future’ as within the schools and at branches, ‘the opportunity is taken to educate the children in Irish literature hostile to England and to teach them rebel songs, etc, and to imbue them with a hatred of all things English’.²⁴ Despite his obvious bias, his conclusion was not entirely inaccurate, as there was a definite link between the young men who joined the Gaelic League in the 1890s, and those who were involved in the Irish revolution of the twentieth century. The wheels were in motion - the radical nationalist ideas that were reflected and mobilised through new organisations such as the Gaelic League in this period, particularly amongst the young, were an important precursor to later political thought.

The foundation for the later revolutionary period was laid in the late nineteenth century, when a variety of factors – from economic distress to modernisation – coincided with the emergence of growing political consciousness in both town and countryside. By the early twentieth century this process of politicisation was complete. The inhabitants of the towns and scattered villages, even the communities of those remote rural and isolated regions in the west and north-west of the county, had become more increasingly integrated into national affairs. The idea of a nation of as a body of united people was evident.²⁵ Speaking soon after the outbreak of Fenianism, a magistrate

²³ Simon James, *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient people or Modern Invention?* (Wisconsin, 1999) p. 130.

²⁴ CBS, PIRSS, Carton Three, 17 February 1902, 26398/S.

²⁵ Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen*, p. 485.

reported that ‘being 45 years a magistrate for both counties [of Clare and Galway] I have lived through similar states of insurrection, but none ...when the English government have so few friends’.²⁶ Police reported in alarm that crowds who joined the Land League were in active co-operation with one another, indicating that communities were more united than ever before.²⁷ This was nationalism, which mobilised the large numbers of the rural communities under the banner of a common objective, however artificial.

Until recently, most historical works have obscured the extent of radical political consciousness in the later nineteenth century. Clare’s unique position gives a greater insight into the development of radical political ideas than has been possible up to now, the particular characteristics of the county raising issues which have not been discussed before. Clare was often an entity in itself, as Douglas Hyde stated on a trip to Clare in 1909 – ‘Clare standing midway between Munster and Connaught [shows] much of the excellencies of both and little of the extreme peculiarities of either’.²⁸ It occupied a medium ground – one region economically poor, others prosperous, making it a useful microcosm for the study of both provinces as a whole. Modernisation was undoubtedly delayed in some regions, but its spread from east to west, matched what was happening nationally – new ideas were spreading to the most remote regions and Clare, located in the extreme west of Ireland, is a case study of how these ideas affected even those populations that were completely and utterly remote from Dublin and other political centres. But even though it was a world apart, it was surprisingly in touch. Many historians have observed the degree to which emigration was a way of life in Clare but few have calculated how this emigration actually accelerated popular political development in the county. More so than any other county, the links it maintained abroad showed that a visible American dimension existed within politics at this time, which shaped and encouraged political activity at home. It was a county, more so than any other that had a surprisingly large cohort of young men who were becoming involved in political groups such as the IRB. Land-related issues certainly shaped their

²⁶ Fenian Papers, Box Ten, 5300R, 29 October 1869

²⁷ For more see, *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary, H.C., 1883, XXXII*, p.389; CO904/74, Reel 40, ‘RIC Inspector General and County Inspectors Monthly Reports’, January 1902.

²⁸ *Gaelic American*, 12 June 1909.

political involvement, but so did political experiences and more abstract nationalist ideas – a process made possible by their literacy, access to education, and susceptibility to the teachings of cultural organisations such as the Gaelic League. In the Clare context, at least, these views were a product of modernisation, and showed the development of a distinct ideology that provided a firm foundation for the revolutionary mentality of a later period.

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